



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600077901U







H O N O R   B L A K E.



# HONOR BLAKE

THE STORY OF A PLAIN WOMAN

BY

MRS. R. H. KEATINGE

AUTHOR OF 'ENGLISH HOMES IN INDIA.'



VOLUME I.

LONDON  
HENRY S. KING & CO.  
1872.

249.9.184.



*ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.*

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO

**My Mother**

WHO, THOUGH WELL FITTED TO CRITICISE IT,

WILL, I KNOW,

BE AS INDULGENT TO THIS,

AS SHE HAS BEEN

TO ALL MY ACTIONS THROUGH LIFE.

THE RESIDENCY,  
MOUNT ABOO, *May* 1870.



## CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.		
KILDAGGAN,		PAGE I
CHAPTER II.		
HOW TO BE A LADY,		19
CHAPTER III.		
AT HOME AND ABROAD,		48
CHAPTER IV.		
GENTEEL POVERTY,		62
CHAPTER V.		
EN ROUTE,		91
CHAPTER VI.		
LADY TRACY,		104
CHAPTER VII.		
HONOR FINDS A FRIEND, AND HAS A PEEP AT A HERO,		119

CHAPTER VIII.	
LONGFELLOW AND DICKENS, . . . .	PAGE 157
CHAPTER IX.	
BAYONNE, . . . . .	175
CHAPTER X.	
HONOR'S FIRST BALL, . . . . .	197
CHAPTER XI.	
SISTER JUSTINE, . . . . .	211
CHAPTER XII.	
A NEW HOME, . . . . .	227
CHAPTER XIII.	
A 'MARIAGE DE CONVENANCE,' . . . .	247
CHAPTER XIV.	
A 'MARIAGE MANQUÉ,' . . . . .	254
CHAPTER XV.	
EDITH'S HISTORY, . . . . .	284



# HONOR BLAKE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### KILDAGGAN.

**I** HAVE been swinging you all the morning, Conny, and you promised me you would let me have my turn soon.'

'I did not know then that the boys were coming out, Honor, and you know you are so fat, Phil does not like to swing you.'

The first speaker was a clumsy, ungainly-looking girl, seated in a swing in an old-fashioned orchard. She might, from her size and figure, have been thirteen years of age, but her face and manner were those of a child of eleven, or younger.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



...her  
...her  
...her  
...her  
...were  
...much too  
...crooked  
...hooks  
...large rent in  
...shoes were worn  
...them the thick  
...position in the  
...white stockings, so  
...compel the wearer  
...place by repeated

...any one who could  
...might have judged that  
...Decidedly plain as  
...ward and scarcely her  
...witness of unmistakable  
...of her open brow, and  
...she possessed—a pair of  
...a depth of vivid

noble purpose, and warm, self-devoted, while they looked straight in your eyes belonging to true hearts alone

and half whispered the words with which my story begins to a little sylph-like attendant by her.

Like the two were sisters there was just a likeness in their dress to suggest; but the difference, even in that, was great as in the

younger—she was evidently so, though unlike that of her sister, looked older—years—was singularly beautiful in aspect; and, scanty as the means at her disposal for setting her face and figure off to advantage seemed to be, the spirit of feminine ingenuity had been at work to make the most of

her dress was of the same coarse material as her sister's, but fitted her pretty figure perfectly; it was very neatly put on; with a lace collar which had belonged to one of baby's caps, and a ribbon, pegged from the nurse, tacked round her white throat. Her fairy feet were



the picture of neatness—even the village shoemaker having softened under the influence of such models, and brought forth a *chaussure* very different from that of poor Honor. Her bonnet was ornamented by a wreath of ivy leaves, which, however fantastic, formed a pleasant relief to its coarse plainness; and round her carefully-arranged curls she wore a band of cheap blue ribbon, suiting exquisitely with their flaxen luxuriance and the delicate pink and red complexion of the finely moulded features beneath.

She was a very beautiful little picture, and so seemed to think a youth of seventeen, who, approaching through the apple trees, caught her in his arms and kissed her repeatedly.

He was followed by a younger boy, who called, 'Come along, Conny; Dick and I will swing you.—Get out of that, Honor;' and catching the seat of the swing behind, he precipitated Honor, ungracefully sprawling, on the ground.

'Don't be rude, Phil,' said the tallest youth.—'Come, my beauty, jump!' and he lifted Conny's graceful form lightly into the swing.

Honor struggled to her feet with a very red face, and an additional tear in her frock.

‘It is my turn to swing,’ she remonstrated; ‘I have been swinging Conny all morning, and she promised I should have my turn when the shade of the great apple-tree came up to the wasps’ nest.’

‘I did not know Dick was coming out then,’ said Conny, half closing her pretty eyes, with an expression of pleasure, as the swing carried her up towards the branches above.

‘You shut up,’ said Philip; ‘who do you think would swing a porpoise like you? Get out of the way, will you!’ and Honor scrambled to one side. In doing so she dropped from her pocket, torn in her late fall, a crumpled and blotted scrap of paper.

‘What is this?’ cried Phil, picking it up; ‘oh dear! how grand!’ and he began to read it aloud:—

‘I love to hear the song of birds.’

Poor Honor, who, busily occupied in the background pinning up her rents, had not discovered her loss, now sprang forward. ‘That is mine, Phil! Give it back to me! You have no

right to read it! It is mine!' Phil held it high above his head, executing a triumphal dance, as he kept it out of her reach, and continued—

'I love to hear the song of birds,  
The pleasant hum of bees,  
The murmur of the summer wind,  
Among the forest trees.

I love to see all beauteous things,  
In air, and earth, and sky,  
The flowers that grow beside our path,  
The sun that shines on high.

But more than all, things bright and fair  
I love to see and hear ;  
The face of those whom I love well,  
The voices I hold dear.

But ah ! I have so few to love,  
I feel so lone and sad ;  
I often think if I could die,  
I should be very glad.

Only things beautiful are loved,  
And I was never fair ;  
And so, my heart is very lone,  
My life is very bare.'

A roar of laughter from Richard and Constance formed the chorus to Phil's reading, and was echoed by a group, consisting of a pale, intelligent boy in an invalid-chair, pushed by a garden lad, a younger boy, and a nurse-

maid carrying a baby, who had come up as the reading began.

‘What fun!’ cried Philip, as soon as he could speak for laughing. ‘Porpoise is going to write poems like L. E. L. or some of those people, I suppose! What will you call them? “The Puffings of a Porpoise”?’ and the whole party fell into renewed paroxysms of mirth.

A wild light flashed from Honor’s eyes, her cheeks flushed deeper crimson, and she sprang at her tormentor with cat-like fury, seized his hand and bit it, till he gave up his hold of the paper, and then, tearing it into shreds, she dashed them at him, stamped her foot, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, ‘Mean! dishonourable! to read what is not yours.’

‘You tiger cat!’ said Phil, squeezing his bitten finger.

‘I will whip you for that, Honor,’ said Richard. Honor turned to fly, but Phil put forward his foot, and tripped her up, and Richard caught her, and, snatching off her bonnet, administered a castigation with it, as she lay struggling on the grass, and then pitched it into the tree above, while he secured

her hands behind her with a handkerchief, and placing her under a tree 'to cool,' as he said, returned to his place at the swing.

'Master Richard, your mother is calling you,' said the nurse-maid, a few minutes afterwards; 'dinner is ready,' and the whole party trooped towards the house, Richard first releasing Honor's hands, with a warning to keep her temper in future, and leaving her to climb the tree after her bonnet, which she did, cleverly enough, if not elegantly.

Dinner was partly over when she reached the house, and after receiving a reproof for her want of punctuality and disordered hair, she seated herself in silence.

Richard sat at one end of the table, opposite his mother—a fair, faded, fretful woman, with weakness and indolence written in her face. A worse person, perhaps, could hardly have been found to fulfil the duties of mother to that young family, placed in the false position so common in Ireland twenty years ago—that of well-born gentry, possessed of nominal property, but actually with hardly means to procure the necessaries of life.

Mr. Blake's ancestors having at one time been people of fortune, he laboured under a perpetual delusion that all society was bound to treat him as though he were the heir to the ancient wealth as well as to the name of Blake. There were but two, or at most three, professions a Blake could adopt without losing caste, and somehow the entrance to these seemed all to require more energy or more interest than he possessed; so Mr. Blake had never found any work by which to mend his fortunes.

He had married, eighteen years before, the daughter of another Irish gentleman—a girl as poor, as well-born, and as ill-educated for all the realities of life as he was himself,—and had lived ever since in a yearly strengthening conviction that the world was in a state of rapid degeneracy. A grievous sign of this he considered it to be, that the vulgar tradespeople round Kildaggan should ask for the settlement of their long-standing accounts, and actually refuse further credit unless their claims were attended to.

Still more pitifully demonstrative of the national falling away from all good he counted

the fact that the Government would neither endow him with a lucrative post, nor yet provide for any of his sons. And so the young Blakes received the most erratic education: placed at a school recommended by its cheapness for part of a year, and suddenly withdrawn for some frivolous reason; then allowed to idle in the Kildaggan stables for six months, and again another school tried, with like result. The only wonder was that they had grown up as gentlemanly as they were.

As for the daughters, they received no education at all. Several times within Honor's recollection she had been placed under the care of a resident governess, this being considered, in those days, the only way in which an Irish gentleman's daughter could be educated; but whether it was that Kildaggan did not prove an attractive home to those ladies, or whether the limited salary offered them failed to secure one who was desirable, none of them entered on a second quarter in the place; and, at the time my story opens, Honor had long been without any instruction, except an irregular form of lessons, to be

learned for her mother, and recited amid so many interruptions, and such a Babel of noise, that neither pupil nor teacher could hear her own voice, and such self-culture as she could pick up from the very limited supply of books the house afforded her. The girl was possessed of strong mental powers, and a very tender, affectionate heart; but while the former were thus left without culture, the latter was daily stung and wounded by the want of love which enveloped her life.

Mrs. Blake was an affectionate woman in her way. She was proud of her fine, noble-looking elder sons and her beautiful Constance, and had that peculiar fondness which weak natures share with the lower animals for her youngest boy and girl, still of the nursery age; but the whole strength of her love, if such a term as strength may be used to express any emotion of hers, was bestowed on her third son, Newton.

He was almost the handsomest of all her children, and certainly, with the exception perhaps of Honor, the most intellectual; but an accident some years before had injured his



spine, and rendered him a partial cripple. This circumstance had only redoubled his mother's affection; and indeed it was the great redeeming point in her character that she loved Newton better than herself. As for Honor, it is not too much to say that Mrs. Blake had no affection for her. The child's plainness and awkwardness were a perpetual source of mortification; her very name—an old family one, which Mr. Blake had insisted on—her mother deemed common and vulgar; and when she said, as she often did, that the girl reminded her of her Aunt Honor—a maiden sister-in-law with whom she had had a life-long feud—her feelings at the moment were something near akin to dislike.

Nor was there any one among her brothers and sisters to whom Honor could turn for that missing love. The Blakes had not been educated in any principles of family affection; no doubt, they were all fond of one another in a certain way, but not so as to make them patient with the shortcomings which in Honor provoked her mother.

To her elder brothers she was a sort of butt

—to their school-boy minds nothing womanly or sensitive could co-exist with her clumsy exterior, so they teased and bullied her, with no intention of absolute unkindness, exactly as if she had been another boy.

Constance felt little else but contempt for her sister. The little beauty was growing up in all the selfishness the constant praises she heard of her own charms, with no mental training to balance the evil, were sure to produce. She patronized Honor condescendingly at times, and 'snubbed' her when less amiably disposed, but always insisted on the lion's share of every indulgence for herself.

Newton was too much wrapped up in himself and his sufferings to care greatly for any one else; and the little ones, young as they were, showed a preference for every one above clumsy Honor. Nor had the girl ever been trained to any of those useful offices which purchase love from the young and weak. She could no more help to tend Newton than she could nurse the baby, and sooth to say, had little inclination for those or any other feminine tasks.

She was never so happy as when she could escape from all restraint, and, either crouching in a lumber-room, devour some precious volume she had got hold of, or when, wandering through the fields and woods, she would sit for hours among the branches of trees, which she climbed like a squirrel, little heeding the torn and soiled clothes she would bring home, or the lectures she was sure to receive for her unfeminine predilections.

Her supply of books was, as I have said, very limited, but she had a boundless, never-failing resource, when these were exhausted, in the world of fancy wherein her soul used to wander during those lonely hours. It was seldom she wrote down her thoughts, for writing was a slow and painful operation to her, but not the less diligently did she manufacture pages of childish verses and high-flown romances, which she would repeat to herself till the woods and meadows were all peopled with the beings of her imagination—and, strange to say, Honor's loneliness had not made her selfish. In her *conduct* she might be so, from sheer want of knowledge how to do better.

No one had ever told her how she might lighten the hours of Newton's confinement, by sharing some of her visions with him, or make her home more happy by a useful feminine attention to trifling duties—it was not part of the Kildaggan training to esteem such things—but in heart Honor was not selfish. She would have given her life to serve those she loved, and she did love all her unloving relations warmly. She never blamed them for not loving her. The child's heart was all humility, and she sincerely believed that their estimate of her was the true one, and that if she were less ugly, less awkward, and more worthy, they would have loved her better.

She often shed bitter, lonely tears over her own deficiencies, but accepted them and their consequences as entirely her own fault.

Her father was the person in the house who loved Honor best. The name, which excited her mother's disgust, was dear to him; and, while he was sometimes provoked at the child's faults, he had too much generosity to resent her plainness, and he appreciated her mental powers more than his wife could do.

In return Honor worshipped her father, but it was with a trembling, indemonstrative worship, for Mr. Blake was a violent-tempered man, more feared than loved by his children, and of late years pecuniary embarrassments had not sweetened his disposition. He had grown disagreeable and imperious to all, and had quarrelled with his nearest neighbours.

The county society, like most such in Ireland, was very scattered, and Mrs. Blake never had a carriage at her command now, so the family gradually dropped out of all intercourse with others in their own rank—a circumstance little regretted by its head, whose pride was sorely wounded by the contrast of his own poverty with the wealth of some who were more prosperous. And so, on the day of which I write, it was a strange and exciting event when the noise of wheels was heard in the avenue, and a barouche stopped at the door.

‘There is Lady Erinmore and her two daughters, and their governess,’ said Philip, who sat nearest the window. Mrs. Blake rose to repair to the drawing-room.

Conny laid down her knife and fork, smoothed

her curls, and re-arranged her hair-ribbon. A flush came into Honor's face, and she looked timidly at her mother.

'Miss Scott, Lady Erinmore's governess, promised to come and see me,' she said. 'We met her in Grady's shop, mamma. I liked her and Florence Erinmore so much that day, and they said they would bring me some books. May I come into the drawing-room?'

'Well, I suppose you must,' said her mother, 'if the visit is partly for you; but, dear me, Honor, how untidy you are!'

'She can't go in, mother!' broke in Richard. 'She is not fit to go into the drawing-room. Only look at her! she is not a bit like a lady,' and he pointed to her torn dress.

Mrs. Blake shook her head. 'Your brother is right, Honor; stay and finish your dinner. Conny shall come with me. She is always tidy. I wish you would try to be more like her,' she sighed, as she left the room.

Bitter tears welled up into Honor's eyes, but the fear of her brothers' ridicule forced her to swallow them. However, as the elder boys left the room for a nearer look at the carriage-

horses, and Newton was wheeled to the drawing-room, to join his mother, and the children carried away by the nurse, she stole from her scarcely tasted dinner, and escaped by a back-door into the orchard, where she threw herself on her face in the long herbage, and yielded to a very tempest of sobs and tears, clutching the grass and moaning, as if in bodily pain.

## CHAPTER II.

### HOW TO BE A LADY.

**S**HE had lain thus for nearly half-an-hour, and the storm had almost spent itself, when the noise of a wheelbarrow coming along the path, and a voice whistling, caused her to look up. The new-comer was a man in the dress of the better class of Irish peasants, and bore in his face that expression of thoughtful intelligence so common among them.

‘Is that you, Miss Honor?’ he cried, as he came suddenly upon her. ‘Sure, ye startled me! I did not think to find you lying here yer lone. Miss Conny and the young gentlemen are up at the house, with the little Miss Erinmores, who have come to see ye.’

Then, for the first time seeing Honor’s red eyes, and observing the sobs that still burst



from her at intervals, he went on with native delicacy—

‘But sure it’s always fonder of the fields nor the house you are, Miss Honor! Will ye get in the barrow, and I will give ye a ride?’

‘Where are you going, M’Carthy?’

‘Down to my mother’s for a load of blue emperors. Master Newton won’t eat the other potatoes, nurse says; and indeed they are mostly touched with the blight.’

Truly most things in Kildaggan were so, and the produce of those over-tired and scantily dressed lands was at times hardly worth the trouble of cultivation.

M’Carthy was, as his father and grandfather had been before him, the steward of the Blakes, and though possessed of a far higher and better cultured intellect than had been the lot of his ancestors, he inherited from them the one quality of feudal devotion to his master’s falling house.

Had Laurence M’Carthy earlier succeeded his father in his office of steward, he might have arrested Mr. Blake’s coming ruin, but the younger man had passed the years that followed

his boyhood away from Kildaggan, living with an old priest, a distant relation of his mother's, and receiving an education which Father Monaghan had fondly hoped would fit the clever youth to follow in his own steps.

The bright eyes of a little neighbour, who had been the lad's earliest playmate, had come between him and that view of life ; so the good Father was forced regretfully to let his protégé return home on old M'Carthy's death, two years before, to take up the hereditary post, and betroth himself to pretty Ellen Daly.

On investigating the affairs committed to his charge, Laurence found that the ruin of the old family he served was too imminent for any efforts of his to avert it. All he could do he did. He lent the whole powers of his mind, and everything else he possessed, to the work, but it was beyond him ; and the utmost he could effect was to stave off for a time the inevitable end, and to eke out of the wasted property such comforts as were possible for Mrs. Blake and her children.

To this object his own little all was ungrudgingly devoted, and that with a delicacy which

could not wound the most sensitive pride. On one excuse or other, the produce of his fields and small dairy mostly found its way to 'the house ;' his hands tilled the garden, and tended the cattle, and his wages he never touched. His mother and sister were able to support themselves by their work ; and Ellen Daly had cheerfully consented to wait for her lover's hand till 'better days' should dawn for 'the family.' Laurence M'Carthy's heart often misgave him that these better days could only be attained through the dark pathway of utter ruin and dispersion. Better read than his compeers, the coming shadow of that hard but needful measure, which was to clear Ireland of such 'encumbered estates' as Kildaggan, was already looming before his mind's eye. He would have died to save the old place for the old stock ; but there were moments when M'Carthy's better sense told him, that if this were indeed to be, it would be better it should come soon, and set Richard and Philip Blake free to make their way in life unshackled by the hollow tradition of hereditary property, while yet so young that they would fall easily into a new order of things.

Still, whenever the blow fell, sooner or later, it must be a terrible one, and no exertion on M'Carthy's part was wanting that could help to mitigate or defer it ; but he might as well have tried to regenerate Ireland single-handed as to evoke anything like prudence or foresight in Mr. Blake. The man was blind, and could not, or would not, see how the reckless, wasteful disorder of his affairs must end ; and all M'Carthy's efforts were thwarted by his master's obstinacy and folly.

The reputation of M'Carthy's superior training had spread into the nursery at Kildaggan. Honor had heard the nurse-maid say he had 'got a power of larnin' from the priests,' and her mother express a hope that he had not been 'educated above his position ;' and therefore, as soon as she was comfortably seated in the wheelbarrow, she turned to him for the solution of a question which had occupied her thoughts during the last half-hour.

'M'Carthy, I want to ask you a question ; I daresay you can answer it.'

'What is it, Miss Honor ?'

'I want,' said the girl, turning her earnest face

round so as to look into that of her charioteer,  
'I want to know how I am to learn to be a lady,  
M'Carthy?'

'A what, Miss Honor?'

'A lady; a young lady.'

'Sure then it's joking ye are,' cried the Irishman, who retained the full flavour of the national dialect in spite of his education, as indeed I have noticed that higher born and better schooled men have done,—'Sure, Miss Honor, it's joking ye are now! There never was a Blake yet, man or woman, God bless them, but were ladies and gentlemen born; and it's not the hard times that are on us, more's the pity, would hinder them being *that*.'

'I know that, M'Carthy,' said the girl proudly. 'I was not talking of that sort of thing; I meant, not how people are born ladies, but how do they learn to *be* ladies themselves, like other people. Richard says I am not,' and tears filled her eyes and choked her voice.

'I know, I know, Miss Honor,' hastily put in the good-natured man; 'I understand what you mane now: it's not how to be a lady born you're asking—for that you are, and no mis-

take,—but how to get the taching that's fitting for ye?'

Honor nodded assent, and M'Carthy, after musing a minute, went on—

'What would ye think, now, of a boarding-school in Dublin for a year or two, if the master would send ye there?'

Now M'Carthy was perfectly well aware that his suggestion was an infringement on the traditionary dignity of the Blakes. Not Mr. Blake himself could have been more alive than he was to the difference between a daughter of Kildaggan and the youthful *bourgeoisie* to whose use in those days the girls' schools of Dublin were supposed to be exclusively devoted; but the servant, having that sense and discernment which his master lacked, knew that a second-rate education was better than none. This was not the first time he had thought of the necessity of some teaching for Honor and her sister; and, as a good governess was out of the question, a school seemed the only thing left.

'It will cost a power of money,' he mused; 'but we must try to do it somehow;' and

then he reflected how a neighbouring grazier had offered a large rent for the use of two pasture-fields of Mr. Blake's, hitherto reserved for their own animals.

'We can sell the cows,' he thought, 'and my mother must spare milk enough for the house, as well as the butter she sends now. They must pinch a bit in the kitchen, that's all, and I'll see if I can't buy that heifer of Barney Flanagan's cheap, to help us through the winter.'

Meantime Honor had caught at the idea with hungry avidity. She was too young to understand the 'caste question' involved in the school plan, and to her mind it was one full of unalloyed delight. A journey to a new place, new companions, and, above all, boundless facilities for learning, and unlimited books—these things crowded rapidly and vividly on her active imagination, making a picture of surpassing happiness.

She chattered on about it all, asking questions, and building airy castles, till her quick eye caught the expression of M'Carthy's face, and read it in part aright. He was thinking

how likely it was the girl might be disappointed, how little he could hope, if the money were raised, that Mr. Blake could be induced to spend it on anything so reasonable.

‘Will it cost a great deal?’ asked Honor.

‘Fifty pounds a year, maybe, or more,’ said M‘Carthy.

‘And for how long ought I to go?’

‘Two years,’ M‘Carthy said. He thought two years was about the length of ‘schooling’ Miss Honor should have.

He would not for the world have mentioned where he got his data—from no higher personage than the Misses Kelly, as they called themselves, the daughters of that very grazier who he proposed should rent the fields that were to pay for Honor’s education. These young ladies had, he knew, enjoyed two years of ‘finishing’ at a Dublin school, which, he had heard Mr. Kelly say, had cost £100 for each. Horrible profanation! to think of a Miss Kelly in the same category as a daughter of Kildaggan!

‘Don’t you think less would do, M‘Carthy?’ Honor went on. ‘If other girls go for two



years, might I not make one do, as it will cost so much? I could do double lessons all the time, and I would not mind never having any play-hours; and I would try so very very hard to learn everything.'

'You remind me, Miss Honor, of something Father Burke said last Sunday—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'That's in the Bible,' interrupted Protestant Honor.

'I know nothing about where it is, Miss Honor,' returned her companion, a little coldly; 'I only know what Father Burke said; but maybe *you* would not care to hear that.'

'Yes, I would. Go on; tell me.'

'He said that we must put our might into what our hands found to do, not what we wanted to do; that it was God's business to find the work for us, ours was only to do it as it came. And so I was thinking, Miss Honor, if you should miss going to school after all, it would be just because that is not the work God has found for you, and you will have instead to do the work He finds you at home with your might.'

‘Yes,’ hesitated the child ; ‘but, M‘Carthy, God cannot want people to do work if they have never been taught how, and that is why I should like to go to school—to learn what to do afterwards all my life.’

‘Quite true,’ thought M‘Carthy, but rather out of her depth and his, so he fell back upon a few more of the priest’s simple words of teaching ; and then the conversation was changed by the wheelbarrow reaching the brow of a little hill, at the bottom of which stood his cottage.

‘I see your mother feeding such nice little pigs in front of the door. Are those the new pigs?’ cried Honor.

‘Yes, Miss Honor. Shall I run down the hill?’

Honor nodded, and settled herself securely in her chariot, and M‘Carthy ran her lightly and merrily down the hill, into the middle of the grunting litter, on whom pleasant old Mrs. M‘Carthy was bestowing broken victuals.

‘Arrah! Miss Honor, is that you?’ cried the old woman, ‘sure it’s welcome ye are; Peggy will be proud to see ye; if ye’ll walk in a bit and rest yourself.’

Then to her son—

‘Ellen is widin, Larry; she came over with little Judy half-an-hour ago.’

The house they entered would have been a very poor one for its class in England, but in Ireland it was, by comparison with the cabins around, comfortable, and in spite of mud floor and smoke-stained rafters the large kitchen was clean and tidy. Peggy M‘Carthy was engaged in lifting a goodly pot of steaming potatoes from the iron hook on which it hung in the roomy chimney.

She was, like her brother, very intelligent-looking, and might, like him, have been handsome, had not the traces of small-pox marred her features; but they could not alter or take from the sweet kindliness that shone out of her grey eyes, and made her face, without a single pretension to beauty, a very pleasant one to look upon.

On a settle in the chimney-corner sat an old and infirm beggar-woman, come in to share the ever-ready hospitality of the meal Peggy was preparing. Ellen Daly’s little sister, Judy, was kneeling on the ground admiring a brood of

ducklings, which a clucking hen led fearlessly about the room, and, at the further end, beside a spinning-wheel, beneath the window, stood Ellen herself, a beautiful picture, in her coarse peasant dress, with her dark hair knotted at the back of her finely-shaped head, her milk-white skin, cheeks like blush roses, and soft Irish eyes, the sight of which might have made St. Senanus himself find excuses for Laurence M'Carthy's choice. She was passing the hanks of yarn that lay beside the wheel admiringly through her taper fingers, and the 'brogue' of her people came soft and sweet from her cherry lips, as she spoke to M'Carthy, who, after greeting his sister and the old woman, and kissing the child, moved towards her.

'How beautiful Peggy's spinning is!' she said; 'it will sell foinely.'

'I don't see it's better nor your own,' replied her lover.

The girl shook her head. 'I can't come up to Peggy in spinning, nor in needlework neither; there's not a girl in the country round that can; is there, mother?'

'She's older nor you, alannah,' said Mrs.

M'Carthy, 'and she hasn't the childer you have to bother her neither.' Ellen was the eldest of a large motherless family.

By this time M'Carthy was beside the spinning-wheel, and saying something too low for the rest to hear. Then he took a spade from the corner, and went out at the back-door into the potato field, to dig the blue emperors, accompanied by Ellen. Honor had readily responded to Peggy's invitation to be seated, by springing upon the table, whence her faulty *chaussure* dangled much as it had done from the swing, and whence she eagerly entered into conversation with Judy about the present ducklings, and various other broods, past, absent, and future, on the merits of which Judy was an authority.

'Won't ye eat a pratie, Miss Honor?' said Peggy; 'they're done just as ye like them.'

Honor, who had eaten no dinner, willingly accepted the tempting offer, and was soon furnished with a plate of the 'laughing emperors,' which she began to dispose of with hearty appetite.

Old Betty was equally well provided, and

Mrs. M'Carthy, bustling into the dairy, returned with two bowls of fresh butter-milk, one of which she set before Honor, while Peggy carried the other, with some kindly words, to the beggar-woman, who mumbled forth blessings on the family as she ate. Just then it happened that the odour of the 'emperors' recommended itself to the party Honor had seen outside, and the front door having been left slightly open, they had no hesitation about entering and charging the potato pot.

'Peggy! Peggy!' exclaimed Honor, 'look at the pigs!'

'Arrah, bad luck to yees thin! ye ould thafe of the world! g'long out of that wid ye!' cried Peggy in her strongest dialect, seizing a ladle, with which she aimed a stroke at the maternal pig, who evaded it cleverly by rushing between the legs of little Judy, who had come up to help, and oversetting her on the floor.

Judy was not hurt, and jumped up again at once, and Honor too joined in the pursuit. The pigs ran round and round the kitchen, grunting and squealing, scattering the screaming hen and her brood in their flight, knocking down the fur-

niture, and rushing between their pursuers' legs, the three girls chasing after them, Peggy pouring forth choice Irish epithets, and Honor laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks. At last the intruders were expelled by the back way, and Honor resumed her seat on the table, while Mrs. M'Carthy went to shut the front door, when she stopped and drew back curtsying.

Honor had returned with fresh appetite to her plate, but now her eyes were arrested as if spell-bound, while Mrs. M'Carthy's curtsy ushered in Mrs. Blake, the children, and Conny, in all the glories of a new parasol Lady Erinmore had given her. Newton remained without in his chair. It needed not Mrs. Blake's look or words to convict Honor of her sin. She knew too well what a dire offence she had committed in thus familiarly associating with those whom Mrs. Blake would have called 'her father's dependants'!!

For Mrs. Blake had not, in her youth, enjoyed the country training which was the one good element in the training of her children. She was Dublin-bred ; and if there is one place more than another favourable to the growth of false

and exaggerated ideas of self-importance, it is, or used to be, found among certain coteries in that sweet city.

A few sharp words were all now bestowed on poor Honor, who sadly left her unfinished meal, conscious that the rest of the scolding was reserved till a more convenient opportunity.

Then Mrs. Blake spoke to Mrs. M'Carthy on the subject which had brought her there, which happened to be some fault in the last butter sent her, and on this she commented so forcibly that charity compels us to believe some delicate ruse of M'Carthy's had really left his mistress under the impression that the said butter was paid for by her. Mrs. M'Carthy curtsied, and apologized, and begged the party to rest, but Mrs. Blake declined, and left the cottage, ordering Honor to follow her.

It was a weary walk that homeward one, during which Honor endured a prolonged lecture on her unladylike habits, and, above all, on having 'demeaned herself' to sit and eat with common people, like one of themselves, or like old Betty the beggar-woman—'their other guest,' as Mrs. Blake sneeringly called her; nor, when



she reached home, was she allowed as usual to run into the garden and there forget her woes. Lest she should repeat her offence of roaming to the cottages, she was set down to hem a pocket-handkerchief, and, so occupied, spent the long glorious summer evening in the stifling school-room, till tea-time brought a diversion, and then she was sent to bed.

I grieve, for the sake of my heroine's reputation for feminine virtues, to have to relate that the handkerchief was not hemmed that evening. One finger's length of very coarse dirty stitches, plentifully sprinkled with blood specks, was the whole fruit of her forced labours. M'Carthy's lesson, drawn from Father Burke, had not found its echo in Honor's heart yet.

Indeed, so strong is the bias of early prejudice, that the mere fact of the words being those of a Roman Catholic priest, robbed them of the value they might have had for her. Mr. and Mrs. Blake, though as entirely incapable of teaching their children to do anything with their might, as they were of doing such themselves, would have been smitten with pious horror at the bare idea of one of their family

being instructed directly or indirectly by a 'Popish priest;' and, wild and untractable as Honor might be, she harboured no thought so undutiful as rebellion to those hereditary doctrines would have been.

But the other part of M'Carthy's conversation was not lost or forgotten.

That school grew before Honor's eyes from a fair desire to a brilliant reality. She would ask her father, and he would never refuse her, she believed.

What though the very thought of such boldness made her blood run cold! She would be brave, she would not flinch, and success must attend courage and resolution!

Alas for the many who have so believed!

Midnight student, with damp towel round thy brow, dost thou not hold this faith a gospel truth? Success must follow courage and perseverance! Will the poor country curacy that shall give thee bread when thy hairs are grey, or the nameless grave where thy broken heart shall rest at last, do aught to disprove the glorious fallacy for the next tenant of thy rooms? Noble-hearted young soldier, whose

sisters crowd admiringly to see thy new uniform, while the mother turns away to wipe her eyes—has not all the world told thee the same tale? Is there not a field-marshal's baton in that pretty new portmanteau, quite plain to all those loving female eyes at least? There is an old and broken man living in the next terrace. He has hard work to eke out his scanty half-pay to meet his wants, and when you met him yesterday, carrying home with his own hands some humble household purchase, his brow was contracted either with thoughts of how to meet the tax-gatherer, or with the pain of those old wounds that trouble him; also are there bleaching skeletons among Afghan snows, and crowded graveyards at Scutari, and in the Crimea: but these things oppress not thee; the strong will, the brave heart *must* bring success, thou sayest; and if we did not believe thus when we are young, who would come forward to do this world's work?

And so Honor said to herself while she lay in bed, listening through the summer twilight for the hour when she might get speech of her father.

Mr. Blake had been from home for two days, and returned late that evening. Honor left her door a little open, and she heard dinner taken in, and then removed ; and when the servants' footsteps in the hall had all died away, she heard the dining-room door open and shut, then her mother, talking to Richard, go into the drawing-room.

Her father was alone at last.

Now, there is another doctrine which balances and makes the complement of the above, and, when rightly interpreted, justifies, as it were, what I have called a 'fallacy.' It is this : 'The secret of success is to know how to wait.'

Poor and mean would be the soul who reads this only in the sense of this world's rewards. No ! grey-haired curate, foiled student, poverty-stricken veteran ! or thou, his happier brother in arms, falling in the first breach ! to all and every lot speaks this second motto full-tongued — 'Know how to wait !'

If you knew this secret, if you could look beyond the present, and the work was really heart work, the perseverance true, and the motives lofty, then it is not lost,—the harvest is

sure, though the waiting-time may stretch beyond the limits of what men call life.

But even in its lowest sense there is much in this last saying, and Honor understood it not in the very least. It was not in her blood. Few Blakes ever attained this knowledge at all, and it was yet a long way off from Honor. To her the fitting time was ever the present time; and so, springing from her bed, she noiselessly slipped her shoes on her stockingless feet, and her torn frock over her night-dress, and thus scantily clothed, and with dishevelled hair, she descended the stairs more gently than was her wont, and reached the dining-room undetected.

Mr. Blake was sitting by the table with a tumbler of whisky-punch before him. He was no drunkard, but he had been brought up in an age and in a state of society where men habitually partook of such things. He was musing in a sleepy, stupid way, on apparently no pleasant subject, when Honor stood before him and startled him.

‘Papa!’ she burst forth before he could speak, ‘I want you to grant me a great favour! I want to go to school in Dublin! M’Carthy

says two years is the time, but I will try very hard to learn everything in one year, so as not to cost so much money.' She stopped, for her father's glance frightened her.

'What the deuce has put this in your head?' he cried. 'Where is your mother? Why does she let you run about at this time of night half-dressed?'

'Don't be angry, papa; mamma does not know. I want so badly to be a lady, and M'Carthy says if I go to school I will learn to be one.'

'Confound M'Carthy!' he shouted. 'Has he the impudence to say you are not a lady? Send a daughter of mine to a — Dublin school indeed! I'll see them hanged first! I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Honor, making a companion of your father's steward! and going about the house like this!' and he touched the ragged frock. 'Go to bed directly! It is very extraordinary that with your good birth you can't behave like a young lady!'

Poor Honor never stopped to analyse the contradiction in her father's speech. She ran

up stairs faster than she had come down, crept into bed, and sobbed herself to sleep.

Mr. Blake finished his whisky-punch in a hurry, and went to the drawing-room to scold his wife.

Richard and Philip were both in the room when their father entered, and, it being a part of the Blake creed that all family affairs must be treated as mysteries, Mr. Blake nursed his wrath, and drank his tea in silence, till the boys should retire. Richard, who was poring over a newspaper, looked up and asked—

‘Is not Lady Tracy some relation of yours, sir?’

‘She is your father’s second cousin,’ said Mrs. Blake plaintively.

‘I see her name mentioned in a list of subscribers to a charity,’ said the boy.

‘Likely enough,’ said his mother; ‘likely enough. She is rolling in wealth, and can subscribe to charities, and forget her own flesh and blood.’

Then a gloomy silence ensued—the prosperity of relations was always a grievance at Kildaggan. Mr. Blake broke the silence—

‘Yes, she is my own flesh and blood, and it was under this very roof that spalpeen of an English lieutenant, Sir Thomas Tracy, as he called himself afterward, first saw my cousin Honor.’

‘He soon forgot that when he grew rich,’ said his wife.

‘What did he do?’ asked the boy. ‘Is he alive now?’

‘No; dead long ago,’ said Mrs. Blake; while her husband answered the first half of the question—

‘What did he do, you ask? Well, my lad, I tell you with shame, that, when he was appointed Governor of some foreign island, I, Blake of Kildaggan, demeaned myself to offer to go as his secretary, or take any other well-paid place he chose, and the spalpeen said, with a lot of rubbish about his duty, that he did not think either my habits or attainments qualified me for such work. By George! he knew the sea was between him and me, or he would not have said it.’

‘I think it is a pity all the same,’ said Mrs. Blake, ‘you quarrelled with your cousin. She



has good Indian interest, I think, and maybe she'd help the boys to something out there if you'd ask her.'

'I'm not going to ask her, Mrs. Blake, but you may if you like,' growled her husband.

'May I, sir?' pleaded Richard earnestly, 'may I ask her if she can get me an Indian cadetship?'

'It is a poor look-out for the house of Blake,' said his father, 'if the heir must needs go and seek his bread as a soldier; but I see your mother wishes it, my boy, and I have nothing to say against her and you. Maybe you're right to forsake the old place, for it's falling fast, and I daresay you and your mother can do better for yourself elsewhere, and of course I would not ask you to stay to be the comfort of my old age.'

Now, this speech on Mr. Blake's part was entirely hypocritical and gratuitous. He was always grumbling because he could not get employment for his sons, and he caught at the idea of the cadetship as a happy way of ridding himself of the support of one at least, but his dignity and his temper alike demanded that he

should yield his consent as extorted from him by his wife and son. He wrangled with them for nearly an hour, till Richard at last offered to give up the plan—and this made his father anxious to stop the discussion, so it was settled that the boy and his mother should write to Lady Tracy the next day, and Richard, with Phil, who had been asleep on the couch most of the time, took his way to bed.

Then Mr. Blake took up the subject of Honor's misdemeanours, and discoursed sternly on them to his wife. The mother wept, and declared herself not to blame.

'The girl is beyond me,' she said; 'I can't run after her all day. This afternoon she went off with your steward, Mr. Blake, and I found her in their vulgar cottage, eating potatoes with an old beggar-woman. She will break my heart.'

'Why the deuce don't you get a governess, if you can't educate your own girls?' thundered her husband. Mrs. Blake might have reminded her lord of the difficulty she had experienced in procuring the salary due to the last governess before that lady left the house, but she

saw he was growing angry, so she held her tongue, and only promised to do her best to keep Honor in order in future.

To this end a course of 'lessons at home' was announced to the girl next morning, as about to be sternly carried out; but, on searching for books to begin, none that Honor did not already know by heart could be found, except an old-fashioned spelling-book with meanings attached.

This, however defective in some qualities, would, Mrs. Blake concluded, serve the chief end of keeping the girl out of mischief, while she wrote her letter to Lady Tracy; and so Honor was set down to learn column after column by rote. 'Alphabet'—'adjective,'—'bachelor'—'barrister,' *ad infinitum*. Honor has told me that long years afterwards she could not use, in speaking or writing, some of these words without a shudder, so terrible was the penance to which she was daily subjected for the remainder of that summer.

The only thing that saved her brain from injury, I believe, was that, when Richard was going away, he gave her an odd volume of the

Arabian Nights. This she used to read in secret corners, and by the window in the moonlight, when she was supposed to be in bed, and it formed a powerful antidote to the spelling-book.

So ended Honor Blake's first attempt to go to school.

## CHAPTER III.

### AT HOME AND ABROAD.

'He, the young and strong, who cherished  
Noble longings for the strife,  
By the road-side fell and perished.'—LONGFELLOW.



RS. BLAKE was not right when she said Lady Tracy had forgotten her own flesh and blood. Had the former lady's memory not had a weak place on the subject of favours received, she might have recalled many a kindness, shown by presents for the children and other gifts, before Mr. Blake's violent language on the occasion of Sir Thomas Tracy refusing to use the patronage, of which he was appointed trustee, for the benefit of his wife's incapable Irish cousins, had made a breach that had never since been healed. However, there was no ill-will borne, on one side at least, and the answer which came to Richard's and his mother's letters made the lad's heart leap for joy.

Not only did Lady Tracy say she had asked for and obtained a cadetship for Richard Blake, but she begged to be allowed to furnish his outfit and pay for his passage to India, and promised him introductions to some friends of hers in that country. The time fixed for his departure was an early one, and ere the first snows whitened the hills behind Kildaggan, the heir of those debt-charged acres was half-way to the golden East<sup>1</sup> with bright visions for the future before him.

Take them all in all, Richard was perhaps at this time the best of the Blakes.

He was a fine, honourable, truthful boy, with a real desire to work, and an earnest wish to advance himself by his own exertions, not by those of others, and a generous heart that would prompt participation in all he possessed with those he loved.

Alas! alas, for such brave young hearts! You and I, reader, of middle age, have seen, oft and again, the names of a hundred such, scattered along one page of an official Gazette, —beautiful stones, upon which another buttress

<sup>1</sup> The 'squalid East,' it has lately been more appropriately termed

of our Empire is reared—in victory and pride—and then they are forgotten !

The gravest fault an observer of the Blake family could have found with Richard, was his treatment of Honor ; but the worst part of this was done in ignorance.

He never knew how much the girl felt her own shortcomings ; and to do him justice, had his parents only confided to him their embarrassments about her, or had she in any way let him know her desire for improvement, they might all have found a ready and able helper in Richard.

Nor did Honor's generous forgiving nature ever blame him in aught, and the tears she shed over his departure were perhaps the bitterest and most lasting of all which fell for him.

That was a dark, dreary winter at Kildaggan. The weather was severe, and blight and scarcity were rife in the land.

The part of the country where Kildaggan lay was not one of those which had been most heavily visited by the terrible famine of some years before ; but there was no corner of

Ireland where that had not been felt, enough at least to waste and press out all strength to stand up against future trials. And so this hard winter was a cruel one all around the Blakes. And they, God help them! had little power to aid others,—they, whom nothing had ever yet taught to aid themselves!

A late, ungenial spring was dawning, when one afternoon Mr. Blake returned to his house from a ride, during which he had called at the post-office for his letters, and went at once, with gloomy face and an uncertain step, into the room called by courtesy his 'study.' Newton, who had lately been a great sufferer, was not well that day, and Mrs. Blake was by his bedside. Philip was away, gone to a neighbouring cattle-fair with M'Carthy.

When it grew dark the butler carried lights into the study, drew the curtains, and made up the fire. Mr. Blake was sitting with his hat on, and an open letter before him, and took no notice of the man, till the latter returned with a message from his mistress, 'Would Mr. Blake sit down to dinner alone? she would take hers by Master Newton.'



‘No, take away the dinner; I don’t want any,’ said his master. ‘And leave me alone—don’t bother me, Pat.’

The butler retired, and reported to the cook and nurse that something was very wrong, but none of them could find the heart to trouble poor Mrs. Blake, who was not only anxious about Newton, but worn from sleepless nights looking after him.

‘If Mr. M‘Carthy were only at home!’ said the nurse.

‘The saints send it’s no ill news of Master Richard!’ said the cook.

‘I think it’s money it is,’ said Pat the butler; and then each went his and her way, and nurse made tea and carried a cup to her mistress.

Honor was an unobserved listener to all this, her heart aching as if it would burst.

Never before in her life, I think, had it come into her mind to do a thoughtful, womanly act, but somehow, for once, an impulse guided her that way.

Some tell us there are unseen angels who watch over sleep-walkers on a cliff, or wander-

ing children lost in the darkness ; and sure such good spirits guided poor Honor's hands that dreary April evening. Clumsy hands enough they were. If Phil had been there, he would have laughed to see how she poured the scalding tea over her wrist, and tumbled the saucer unbroken on the ground ; but all the same she filled her father's accustomed cup with very good tea, and, though terrified at her own daring, carried it to him in his study. He rose as she entered, took it from her hands, and drank some, and then removed his hat, and wiped his forehead with a weary sigh.

Honor did not speak ; she could not ; but she lifted up her face to kiss him.

'God bless you !' said her father, as he returned her embrace, 'God bless and help you, my poor unhappy child !—you and all of them.' Then he sat down again, and covered his face with his hands, but, looking up, and seeing her standing near him, said softly, 'Go to bed, Honor.'

Honor obeyed, and though she lay long awake, youth and health prevailed toward midnight, and she slept soundly, till she was roused

by a confused noise of hurrying to and fro, and lamentations, which disturbed all sleepers in Kildaggan that morning.

Blake of Kildaggan, the last Blake of Kildaggan, was found dead in his chair when a servant entered his study in the grey dawn. Before him, on the table, lay the letter that had killed him,—the letter which announced the speedy and irremediable sale of his ancestral acres to pay the debts of himself and his forefathers. On a sheet of paper, also before him, he had begun to trace some feeble pointless lines, asking for reprieve, with an attempt at some calculations as to the number of years in which certain mortgages could be cleared off; and the result, somehow, coming out quite the wrong way, he seemed to have lost command of his senses, and written a half legible line or two of wandering ravings, and then, the doctor said, his heart had broken.

People of higher intellectual organizations, and lives more full of purpose, will smile contemptuously at this verdict for such a one as he, but it was true all the same. That poor, proud, weak, foolish, but loving, kindly heart

broke when ruin fell like a thunderbolt on all he loved on earth.

It was a merciful dispensation, his neighbours said, as they laid him in the burying-place which should receive no more of his old race,—far better thus than to have gone forth a beggar ; and then friendly heads began to plan what must be done for the poor widow and children.

Widowhood!—doom full of sorrow to all, but most so, perhaps, when the world pities it least !

When it comes to exalted rank or sunny youth, we shrink, compassion-stricken, from the sight.

That crimped cap, around brows where precious stones or blooming flowers were fitting wreaths !

Our hearts ache over such breach in the fitness of things ! But sad as this is, there is a lot still sadder.

When the hair is grey, and life is growing old, early friends waxing fewer year by year, and the power to make new ones fled, when, moreover, the death of the husband means poverty and a strange home, with anxieties for

numerous children left penniless as well as fatherless, then is a widow 'a widow indeed;' nor would I refuse due sympathy to poor Mrs. Blake, because, with the sympathy, we cannot give her admiration or full esteem.

She was fortunate in one thing at least, in finding two honest clever friends to help her, as far as in them lay,—Mr. Morgan, the Blakes' Dublin 'man of business,' and Laurence M'Carthy. These two devoted themselves earnestly to the task of trying to rescue something for the widow and orphans. Nor were their endeavours quite unsuccessful. Besides the interest of a trifling sum settled on Mrs. Blake by an uncle, in such a way that neither she nor her husband had ever been able to touch the principal, M'Carthy hoped to be able to realize the proceeds of the sale of the standing crops for Mrs. Blake, and then Mr. Morgan made a discovery which, at one time, promised to restore the family to comparative affluence.

A critic in the *Saturday Review* has recommended to the novel-writers of England, especially the female novel-writers, that they should retain the services of an experienced barrister

to write the *legal* parts of their books for them. I think this is excellent advice, and I hope, that because I do not follow it, no one will suppose me to be such an intellectual outcast as not to read and believe in my *Saturday Review*. I am sorry to say I cannot pursue this plan, for cogent reasons. To begin with : I am not acquainted with any experienced barrister who would help me. I am quite sure some of the brilliant writers in the *Saturday Review* would do it, if they only knew my need ; but then I am living in a far-away corner of the world, and I do not even know the names of any of those intellectual heroes, and I doubt whether I should ask their aid if I did, and so I must tell my simple tale as it happened, and I cannot help it if, either now or hereafter, I fail to explain *how* the law stood as it did. I shall then merely state the fact, with little explanation, that the house of Kildaggan, along with some acres of land immediately round, was discovered by Mr. Morgan not to be entailed property. The old house had been destroyed by fire nearly two hundred years before, and this new one was then built on a

site lately brought into the family by a female ancestress, who shared with her sisters the lands of her father, which joined those of Kildaggan.

This piece of land and the house built on it had never been entailed. They were passed by will from father to son, and the last Blake who had made a will was Richard's grandfather. Richard was the only grandchild born before old Mr. Blake's death, and the latter mentioned the boy in his will as the ultimate heir of this portion of the estate. This now therefore belonged absolutely and unreservedly by will to Richard, who, on coming of age, might dispose of it as he pleased; nor could the mortgages on the entailed estate, or Mr. Blake's other debts, in any way affect this title of the lad's, Mr. Morgan believed.

Richard was written to at once, and no one doubted he would be only too glad to have a home to give to his mother and her children. Mr. Blake's personal creditors were very considerate, and agreed to waive their claims, trusting to Richard's honour against ultimate loss, till they saw what would be left from the sale of the entailed property after paying off

the mortgages ; and so M'Carthy looked forward to saving the furniture and farm-stock for 'the family,' and, with care and industry, making the rescued land yield them a comfortable subsistence.

Let none call the next incident of my tale overdrawn, for it is *true*.

Fifteen days before Blake of Kildaggan breathed his last there was a great battle far away on the banks of an old river. There was a young ensign in that field whose gallantry won the hearts of all who were near him. His regiment bore the brunt of the action, and many a one fell, but he escaped with a slight wound till the last, when the day was their own, and his colonel, riding along the line, singled him out with words of praise. Richard Blake raised his bright young brow, flushed with delight, and put up his left hand—his right arm was tied up in his sash—to salute his commandant, and at that moment a flying enemy took a random shot, and the boy dropped dead, struck through the heart.

The news was conveyed to Kildaggan, with many words of sympathy from Lady Tracy,



who enclosed letters from poor Richard's commanding officer, and others who had valued and who mourned the brave boy.

I may not picture the grief these tidings brought, so I pass over it.

When Mrs. Blake could again attend to business, Mr. Morgan explained to her that, Richard having died first, his father was his heir, and all that had been the son's was swallowed up in the general ruin.

So the survivors of the ruined family must move from their old home.

Mr. Morgan suggested, and finally procured, a cheap dwelling on the north side of Dublin, and there M'Carthy's toil transported such goods as they were able to carry away. It was a very poor home—humble is not the word for it, but *poor*—a home of genteel poverty, most freezing, chilling condition of life, to which Mrs. Blake and her five younger children retired, as the autumn leaves began to redden.

Phil, by Mr. Morgan's advice, went to seek his fortunes in Australia. M'Carthy accompanied the lad to Liverpool, whence he had a second-class passage secured for him.

‘It’s followin’ you I’ll be before long, Master Phil, I doubt,’ said the faithful servant, as they stood together looking over the bulwarks. ‘If it warn’t for the mistress and my ould mother I’d go wid ye now.’

‘Better for *me* you should not, M’Carthy,’ replied the boy. ‘The sooner I learn my level now, and forget that I ought to be Blake of Kildaggan, the better for me.’

The bitter seed of adversity had, you see, already begun to yield its golden fruit. M’Carthy looked up astonished, but all he said was—

‘Then it’s coming after ye I’ll be before long, never fear, Master Phil;’ and then the bell rang, and all those partings that make our English wharves such holy ground were spoken, and the ‘John Peterson’ sailed away to the South Seas.

## CHAPTER IV.

### GENTEEL POVERTY.

**T**HE Reverend Mr. and Mrs. Octavius Bull present their compliments to Mrs. Blake, and request the pleasure of her company, with that of Master Newton Blake and the two Misses Blake, at tea and exposition, on Thursday evening next, at six o'clock precisely.'

'We cannot all go,' said Mrs. Blake, after reading the above aloud. 'Some one must stay with the children, and to look after *that* Mary Anne.'

'Honor won't care to go. She does not like Mrs. Bull, mamma,' said Conny.

Honor looked up from her book.

'You know you said you thought she wanted to patronize us, and that you hated being patronized,' continued her sister.

‘She spoke from the carnal pride of her unregenerate heart,’ said Newton.

‘I fear that is true,’ sighed Mrs. Blake. ‘I wish I could see Honor more what she should be! You shall come with us then, Conny; and Honor, you must really be more careful of Mary Anne than you were last Sunday when we were at church. You know you let her have the key of the pantry, and I am sure she ate a pound of cold mutton at least, besides sugar.’

Mary Anne was the Blakes’ only servant now, and was in every respect a type of her class—an Irish maid-of-all-work. If any of my readers are in blissful ignorance of what that means, I will not enlighten them, only saying, in poor Mary Anne’s behalf, that she was at least as much sinned against as sinning.

She was engaged on (very scanty) board wages, and was perpetually suspected by her mistress, justly or unjustly, of theft and speculation, and looked on as a sort of household foe by all the family, except Honor, who was gloriously indifferent as to whether cold meat was abstracted and rooms ever swept or the reverse.

‘She used half my pomatum yesterday,’ said Conny, ‘and left the pot full of hairs, the nasty vain thing.’

‘I heard Honor talking to her the other day as if she were her equal,’ said Newton, ‘so what can you expect! Besides, she is a Papist.’

Mrs. Blake shook her head at Honor, but had no time for further reproof, as Mrs. Octavius Bull’s messenger was waiting, and she had to write a note accepting the invitation for herself, her second daughter, and her son.

I shall not follow the family group to Mrs. Octavius Bull’s drawing-room.

I shall gladly pass over an entertainment which would I fear provoke, indirectly at least, light speech of subjects too sacred to be spoken of except earnestly.

Rather let us remain with lonely Honor, who coaxed her little brother and sister to bed, by, in defiance of to-morrow’s sure retribution, allowing them to eat up Newton’s special jar of jam for their tea, and then having eaten her own stale bread dry (there was no butter in the house, as only Honor and the children were to have tea at home Mrs. Blake thought

they might do without), allowed herself to be coaxed in turn by Mary Anne to let her go out for a couple of hours.

Then she seated herself by an open window, looking towards the back of the house, through which came, amid the quiet twilight, breathings from afar of country air, and lost all sense of external things in a volume of Shakespeare.

The Blakes had now been for more than a year dwellers in Cavendish Terrace, a row of houses on the outskirts of the north of Dublin. It was a life with little to recommend it to any one, and bitterly did poor Honor often weep over the memory of the fields and orchards of Kildaggan, where she used to wander so freely.

Their present house was small and cramped, and Mrs. Blake's income equally so, while her want of management and her children's defective training made both evils worse.

There are few changes of lot, however, in which some compensation may not be found, and there were doubtless benefits that accrued to the Blakes, even from their reverses.

In the first place, the young people were thus

brought in contact with the rest of their kind, and learned that Kildaggan was not the centre of the world. In the next place, the change did Newton's health good. He became comparatively strong, and was now able to move about without assistance ; and last, but not least, they all obtained a little of something which might, by great courtesy, be called 'education.'

Mrs. Blake and Newton would have added, or rather placed first in this list of benefits, the ministrations and pastoral friendship of the Rev. Octavius Bull, the incumbent of a neighbouring church.

Mr. Bull was, I am sure, a very sincere, earnest man, and if he were somewhat narrow-minded, and wanting in charity to those who differed from him, many a one who is not either sincere or earnest has both these faults, so we will dwell lightly on his shortcomings.

To Newton, with his precocious untaught mind and sickly physical constitution, the man and his doctrines seemed alike sent of God. They suited and fitted themselves into the peculiarities of the poor boy's nature, with a readiness that might have made a wise mother

doubt whether they indeed provided the best mental food for him ; but Mrs. Blake was not a wise mother, only to Newton always a fond one, and she fell readily into all his views, and believed all he and Mr. Bull told her, not exactly as forcibly as they did, but as forcibly as she could believe anything.

As for the boy, he almost outstripped his teacher in zeal. Mr. Bull was wont to say, smiling blandly, that young Newton resembled his great namesake (he did not mean the astronomer, but the preacher of Olney) in grace, as well as in name.

There was much truth and beauty doubtless in Mr. Bull's teaching, and the grave pity was that it was all wrapped up in conventional phrases and words he did not himself more than half understand, till many, who thought they held it firmest, lost the kernel while clinging to the husk.

And in saying this, I only say that Mr. Bull was a believer in and a teacher of immortal truth, while he himself and his disciples were mortal, for in such wise has truth ever been handled in this world, though under many a different guise.



At first Honor was much attracted by Mr. Bull's sermons, but only for a short time. She acknowledged and felt the loveliness that lay at the root of them all, but the superstructure raised above dazed and puzzled her, and she was too entirely truthful to adopt a way of thinking and talking she did not feel or understand.

She wanted something practical, something definite, that would show her what to DO, not only what to THINK, and Mr. Bull's teaching rejected stress upon 'works' as a snare.

There was of course truth in what he and his admirers said so often—'Purify the fountain and you will have sweet waters ;' but the fountain of poor Honor's heart did not so much need purifying as her eyes needed enlightening and her actions guiding.

She was not selfish, nor vain, nor untruthful, neither would she have been indolent if once shown how she ought to work.

Had Mr. Bull only equalled Father Burke in knowledge of human nature, as he excelled him in purity of doctrine, he might have done much for Honor, but he failed to perceive her

needs or benefit her in any way. She, with her brother and sister, attended a weekly Bible-class at Mr. Bull's church, and the young people there were carefully instructed in most abstruse and high theological subjects, of which St. Paul's Epistles, addressed to the elders of the old Christian Churches, formed the basis.

I myself think that had St. Paul been called on to teach those *children*, he would have impressed upon them some subjects which he does not disdain to refer to at the close of most of his Epistles, and the scholars might have learned that industry, punctuality, unselfishness, and humility, in their daily life, were the works their duty to God and their neighbour then demanded of them, instead of, as too often happened, carrying away a number of words and phrases to which, not understanding them, they could not attach any ideas, but the possession of which satisfied them that they were very far superior to all who did not make use of the same language, and gave them a title to 'teach' all such, however above them in age, experience, or position. Thank God there are many many pastors of our English Church who

do unite such 'food for babes,' such humble lessons on daily duties, with the pure Protestant doctrine they teach; but Mr. Octavius Bull was not one of these, and had he been so, he would not probably have attained to the pedestal of unquestioning admiration and reverence to which his present congregation had exalted him.

Mrs. Octavius Bull was an Englishwoman; she was not a highly-bred Englishwoman, as the reader, who has read her note of invitation, may have guessed, but she was, in her own opinion, and in that of Mr. Bull's congregation, a very great lady.

Had she not brought her husband money! and did she not keep a carriage—not a 'jaunting-car,' but a real 'close carriage' (this, by the way, was a gift from some of Mr. Bull's grateful and admiring parishioners)! and a manservant, and a page in buttons! and had not that sainted woman, the Dowager Lady Mac-Flathers, spent two days at her house when she visited Dublin last year! I fear Mrs. Bull was one of those persons of whom I have spoken above, who kept fast hold of the husk

of her husband's teaching, and missed the kernel.

She was always very ready to denounce others as 'worldly,' and nothing would have induced her to wear a flower in her bonnet, or have her handsome dresses made in any but last year's fashion; but nevertheless truth compels me to state I have not often met a woman more entirely 'worldly-minded' than Mrs. Bull. There was very little she said or did that had not reference, either to the opinion of others, or to the advantage of her husband and herself. She had only lately called on Mrs. Blake; it was not her custom to visit those of her husband's flock who were not either rich or influential, but through Mrs. Blake's confidences to her pastor on the subject of her trials, including the history of her poor son Richard, he discovered that the Blakes had a cousin who possessed a title, and then his wife called and invited Mrs. Blake to tea, and, as Honor observed, 'patronized' her. It was Mr. Bull who had recommended to Mrs. Blake the young person who now officiated as daily governess in her family.

A daily governess Mrs. Blake preferred to a school for her daughters for several reasons : first, because she still clung feebly to the *caste* tradition ; secondly, because the little ones, and Newton when his health allowed him, could participate in their sisters' studies ; and lastly, because it was cheaper.

Miss Matilda Little was the youngest of three sisters, who kept a select seminary for young ladies in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bull's church, of which the two elder ladies were counted shining lights. They were tall, large-boned, strong-minded, and strong-bodied women, who looked as if their tempers had been early dipped in a vinegar-cruet, and who seemed to reject all human sympathies as forbidden things. Rigid indeed was the rule exercised over the unfortunate girls who used to be committed by misguided parents to their iron training.

To crush, to keep down, to eradicate—this, and this only, was their theory and practice in the management of the youthful heart ; and it was well for the next generation that their scholastic connexion was limited, and that their pupils were almost all day scholars.

Matilda Little was many years younger than her sisters, and in no way resembled them. She was small and delicate, with sallow cheeks, weak, tearful, light eyes, and a red nose. She suffered much from dyspepsia, and had a feeble little plaintive voice, which she rarely raised above her breath.

She had been educated by her eldest sister, and gave one the idea that the system of 'crushing' and 'keeping down' had been carried in her person to its extreme limit, and not with a satisfactory result. She was painfully timid, blushed scarlet whenever Mrs. Blake spoke to her, and always called her pupils 'Miss Blake' and 'Miss Constance.'

She was very conscientious, poor little lady, attended regularly in all weathers, whether ill or well, and did her feeble best to impart the little she knew to her pupils.

It was not an extended course of study she set before Honor's hungry intellect, but it was better than nothing.

Grammar and arithmetic, Pinnock's Histories, and some very rudimentary geography, moral sentences inscribed as copies in a neat, unde-

cided feminine hand, and a little French, formed nearly all she had to teach, and Honor could very soon have instructed her governess in everything but caligraphy, which did not come easily to her awkward fingers.

In one respect Miss Little's teaching was inestimable to Honor. The governess's knowledge of French was not deep, nor was her accent Parisian, but it was the first foreign language Honor had come in contact with, and, with the acquirement came a new sensation. She read 'Télémaque' through to herself out of school-hours, with the help of the dictionary; and then so earnestly begged the astonished Miss Little for another French book, that the governess brought her, with some qualms as to whether she was doing right, 'L'Histoire de Charles XII., Roi de Suède,' which was only used by the very highest class in her sisters' school; and in this Honor became so interested that she was really unable to leave it off, and was discovered by Newton—horror of horrors!—one Sunday afternoon, weeping over the field of Pultowa.

There was a great scene on that occasion.

Newton could not read French, but he saw the author's name on the title-page, and called it an 'atheistical work.' Mr. Bull was informed, and the elder Miss Little appealed to. They vindicated Charles XII. from Newton's imputation; but also severely scolded Miss Matilda for putting a book only suited to the highest class in a 'beginner's' hands.

Poor Miss Matilda came to lessons looking more sallow and red-eyed than ever next day; but I grieve, for the credit of the efficiency of the 'crushing' system, to have to add that she yielded to Honor's persuasions, and let her have the book to finish, on her solemn promise never to open it except when all the rest of the family were out of the house. This state of affairs usually arrived on Sunday evenings, when Honor and her sister kept the house in turns, while the others went to church and Mary Anne visited her friends; so Honor astonished Conny by offering to take her turn of duty next Sunday, and M. de Voltaire's History was then finished with great satisfaction, and slipped into Miss Matilda's pocket under the table next morning.



That young lady, however, was proof against all Honor's entreaties to lend her another French book.

'I dare not, dear Miss Blake,' she said; 'please don't ask me. You do not know how miserable I was when Theresa read a discourse on "secret sins" after evening prayers! I thought I must have confessed, and I would have done so but for getting you into trouble.'

Then Honor thanked her warmly, and promised never again to ask her to outrage her conscience. Honor would have been badly off for books had she been confined to those in the house, or to the 'discourses' and milk-and-water biographies which Newton borrowed from Mr. Bull; but before she had been very long at Cavendish Terrace she discovered a neighbouring mine of literature, which she worked industriously.

There was a greengrocer named Keegan who kept a small shop in the next street to the Blakes' house, and, besides his other trade, hired out on reasonable terms a Bath or invalid chair. This conveyance was much used by Newton, and Honor was often sent to order it for him.

Now Mrs. Keegan had married below her own social rank. Her father had been a ship-captain, and her widowed mother, Mrs. Doherty, lived with the greengrocer and his wife.

The old woman had a parrot, which her husband had brought from abroad ; and one day this bird became very ill. Honor, who happened to enter the shop while the family were in sore trouble about Poll, mentioned a remedy she had met with in her discursive reading, either in some book of travels or work on natural history. The medicine was tried, and Poll—I will not say as effect following cause—recovered ; but Mrs. Doherty quite believed Honor had cured her pet, and out of gratitude, seeing that the young lady was fond of reading, she offered her the loan of any books she possessed.

This was a great boon to Honor, for the late ship-captain had been an educated man, and had gathered quite a little library about him.

It was fortunate for my heroine that these books were almost all well chosen, for neither she nor Mrs. Doherty would have known how to make any selection ; and Mrs. Blake felt it

beyond her even to try to stem or control the torrent of Honor's love for books.

She constantly grumbled, indeed, because Honor 'did nothing but read;' and Newton more than once suggested that his sister ought not to be allowed to spend her time perusing 'worldly books;' but (excepting as regarded the rigid observance of Sunday) the matter went no further.

The intellectual pasture-fields in which the girl now browsed at will contained mostly English classics of a bygone age, and some standard works. Shakespeare, Addison, Swift, and Goldsmith were there, some few histories, and no end of voyages and travels, and old books on scientific subjects; but the writers of fiction were only represented by Captain Marryat and Miss Burney, with, of course, the Vicar of Wakefield and Walter Scott's poems, and thus Honor was saved from indiscriminate novel-reading, and its attendant effects on a mind thrown, as hers was, entirely on its own companionship.

She had her day-dreams, and built her castles, like other solitary maidens; but, unlike many

another, she was never the chief actor in her own romances.

The heroes of history or travel used to live again for her, and she would imagine herself seeing them and worshipping them from a distance, but nothing more. Were not heroines always lovely and graceful? and she was ugly and awkward! And so she used to manufacture heroines in her imagination, who filled the place vainer girls assign in their day-dreams to themselves; nor in any of these visions had love much part.

Honor was still very young-hearted, and patriotism, friendship, filial or sisterly devotion, all, in her imaginings, shared the place of sovereignty with the master passion,—often ousted it altogether.

She was now fifteen, and if improved a little in some externals, she was, if possible, less attractive-looking than she had been two years before.

What she had gained in tidiness she had lost in picturesqueness, and she was just in that transition state when the mind has not yet begun to *tell* on the looks. She was always

coarsely and shabbily clothed, and her figure was rendered more awkward than was natural to it, by the clumsy make of her garments.

The hard externals of her life also, since she quitted Kildaggan, had left their mark on the girl. Poor food, want of country air, and constant scolding and brow-beating in an uncomfortable home, are not favourable to the growth of physical charms. Honor was just at her worst now,—even another six months would give the intellect within a chance of asserting itself in her appearance, but it would be long, and she must learn much she now despised, before it did so to any great extent. Nor had she much intercourse with society to polish her. Mrs. Blake had no near relations in Dublin, and her early friends were mostly of that class who easily forget people who live in such places as Cavendish Terrace. Mr. Morgan sometimes called on them, but he was a bachelor; and in fact, but for Mr. Bull, and some elderly ladies of his flock, whom a community of feeling led to acquaintance with Newton and his mother, the Blakes would have lived almost as much alone as at Kildaggan.

Honor had not, on the evening I speak of, enjoyed her solitude and her book for very long, when a knock, twice repeated, at the street door, called her unwillingly away.

When she opened it, she nearly leaped into the arms of those who stood there—Laurence M'Carthy and pretty Ellen, now a blushing bride. In a tumult of joy Honor led them into the house, and heard how they had both decided to make their wedding trip to Dublin, chiefly to see 'the family;' and then Ellen produced a little basket, containing fresh eggs and butter, 'with the ould mother's duty.'

They had walked from the coach-office, and Ellen was tired, and asked for a glass of water. Honor went to fetch it, and anxiously searched the pantry for some further refreshments to set before the travellers. There was absolutely nothing. She remembered too well how the last bit of cold mutton had been eaten that day at dinner (Newton always had his own special dish), and when Charlie was about to cry for more, she had given him hers, and risen hungry from table. The children had emptied Newton's sacred jam-pot at tea; there was absolutely

nothing but dry bread in the house, and Mrs. Blake had carefully locked up the side-board in which she kept wine and tea, after leaving out a small modicum of the latter for Honor, and carried away the keys.

When Honor returned to the room where she had left her friends, carrying the glass of cold water, her heart failed her suddenly, and setting the tumbler on the table she threw herself on Ellen's neck and sobbed aloud.

'Arrah! Miss Honor, darlint, what is it?' cried the warm-hearted country girl, while M'Carthy drew near with anxiety.

'O Ellen, Ellen! O M'Carthy! you are tired and hungry, and I have nothing, nothing to give you *to eat*.' Here she sat down, and covered her face with her hands.

'Oh, we are so poor! and everything is dreadful! and I wish I was dead!'

'Miss Honor, Miss Honor, alannah! don't take on so!' said Ellen, kneeling at her feet and kissing her hands, which she wet with tears.

'You are tired and hungry,' said the girl, rising, 'and I am very selfish to worry you so!

Ellen dear, let me try to boil some of these eggs for you, and make you some toast,—I can do that,' but Ellen shook her head.

'Arrah, Miss Honor,' she laughed, 'you wouldn't think of it if you saw the beautiful dinner we had at the place where the coach stopped! Hadn't we, Larry?' and Larry assented to his little bride's pious fiction.

So Honor became more composed, and Ellen told her all the news, and pointed out the special eggs, laid by feathered favourites, Judy had reserved for 'Miss Honor's' own use, and they both said how she was grown, and how well she looked (another pious fiction), and then Honor asked after Kildaggan and 'the new people there.'

'Don't spake of it, Miss Honor,' said M'Carthy, averting his face, while Ellen sighed.

'Mr. Morgan told mamma,' said the girl, 'you were no longer steward there. Tell me about it, M'Carthy.'

'Well, Miss Honor,' he said, 'I'd rather not spake of him, for I hope I bear him no ill-will, for it's a poor Cockney spalpeen he is. It's Mr. Jones—Mr. Jones of Kildaggan, saving



your presence, Miss Blake, I'm talking of! But if you're set on wanting to know, I must tell you how it happened.'

Honor said Yes, she wanted to know it all, and he went on:—

'Well, there's not much to tell. The short and the long of it is, I never liked Mr. Jones, and he never liked me, but Mr. Morgan he recommended me, and I did my duty fairly by him, but there was no pleasing him. The land in Oireland couldn't bear fast enough nor the people work sharp enough for him, so one day what does he call me but a "wasteful Oirishman." "Oirish I am and ever will be, Mr. Jones," says I, "but wasteful is what I never was yet, beggin' yer pardon."

"Why," says he, "it was you and the likes of you brought them Blakes to ruin," so I up and says, "You may say what you please of me, Mr. Jones, but the less that's spoke, sir, of the Blakes in the present company, who are none of them worthy to tie the shoes of that family, the better, sir, and if you please I'll take my discharge."

"That you will directly," says he, "ye im-

pertinent Paddy ye," and so he paid me my wages and I left.'

'And what will you do now?' asked Honor.

'Well, Miss Honor, I'm comin' to that. Ellen (God bless her!) and I have settled that we'll thry what a new counthry will do for us, and I'm goin' to the Imigration Society to-morrow about a passage to Australia.'

'And your mother and Peggy?'

'My mother's lease has another year to run, and by that time I count we'll have things a bit comfortable, and she and Peggy will follow us, and maybe one or two of the childer. Indeed, Ellen's father talks of comin' out himself.'

'I wish I could go with you!' sighed Honor.

'No, no, Miss Honor!' said Ellen; 'it's a young lady you are, and you will be a happy one, never fear, one of these days. Keep a good heart, my darlint, and it will all come right, like the fairy tales you used to read us long ago, when me and Peggy were up picking feathers in the back-garret, and you used to come and sit on a box, and read us such beautiful stories, do you mind?' And so, half-crying, half-laughing, they recalled the simple pleasures of

the days that were past, and the old home which all who had shared should soon take a last farewell of.

As it grew dark M'Carthy said they must be going. He promised to call once more before they quitted Dublin, and left many 'duties' for 'the mistress,' as he still called Mrs. Blake, and the children.

'Miss Conny will be gettin' a beautiful young lady now,' said Ellen, and Honor gave M'Carthy Phil's address, and begged him to seek him out in his new country, and then they parted.

Mary Anne did not keep faith that evening, but over-stayed her leave by an hour, and Mrs. Blake, finding a cold kitchen-grate, and no attendance for Newton on her return, scolded Honor severely. She was scarcely mollified by the sight of the butter and eggs, until a happy thought of Conny's suggested sending some of these to Mrs. Octavius Bull, which gratified Newton exceedingly, and made him forget his present grievances.

The next day Conny's own deft hands arranged the farm produce in a pretty basket

she borrowed from Mrs. Keegan, who gave her some strawberry leaves to line it, and she carried it to Mrs. Bull herself,—‘ From some of poor papa’s tenants on our estate,’ she said it was, and quite mystified Mrs. Octavius, who after that treated the Blakes with far more deference than the size of their present abode entitled them to in her social code.

Conny was indeed becoming not only ‘ beautiful,’ as Ellen had supposed, but in some things very clever. She was not bright over ‘ book-learning,’ but in many more useful things appertaining to their altered lot showed great aptitude of learning. Above all, in every matter belonging to ‘ society’ Conny wanted but opportunity to become a finished woman of the world. She used each little occasion in this line that presented itself, with a quickness that astonished her mother and perfectly bewildered Honor.

Had she been a few years older, and a little more experienced, she felt she could have much exalted the family station in life, and made their income *seem* at least double what it was.

But whatever else she did or did not accomplish, this Conny always succeeded in :

while much more seldom blamed for 'selfishness' than foolish Honor, (selfishness, be it remembered, was Mrs. Blake's pet accusation!) Conny always secured the cream of everything that was to be had in the way of indulgence (after Newton was satisfied, of course) for herself.

A heavy disappointment was in store for Honor. The M'Carthys called while she was at the Bible-class, two days after their first visit, and left a message saying they were just setting off for the country. Then M'Carthy wrote to say 'good-bye.' He and his wife were to sail within a month, from Cork, he said. He would be sure to find Master Phil, and would never forget the Blakes. His mother, Ellen, and Peggy sent their duty to all the family, and little Judy her love to Miss Honor; and there wasn't a creature about the old place but prayed night and day for blessings on the Blakes, and might the saints protect them, wherever they went, and make them great and happy!

This Mrs. Blake called 'nonsense,' and Newton 'Popish.' Only Honor cried over the letter, and when her brother and sister laughed

at her she astonished them all with what they called 'one of her rages,' or a furious passionate outbreak, such as she had yielded to on the day when Phil read her verses.

Such bursts of temper were not frequent with Honor now. She would often endure much personal wrong without even a temptation to such, but at other times a word or a look would provoke the sleeping lion within her, and on such occasions those round her were usually paralysed by terror, quite as much by the unexpectedness as by the force of the visitation.

Anything like injustice, cruelty, or ingratitude to those she loved, or to the weak and helpless, was a sufficient exciting cause, and thus it was that when M'Carthy's letter was ridiculed she spoke forth bitter truths in eloquent, fiery words, and taunted her family with ingratitude to the man who had long bestowed on them not only his services but his substance, without asking return, till her mother was glad to offer any concessions to M'Carthy's memory, and even to scold Newton for what he had said, by way of restoring peace. Then Honor turned round,

lofty and indignant, having said her say, and took shelter in her own room, where she sobbed herself to composure. Those wild fits were always followed by reaction and self-upbraiding penitence, which unhappily none of her family had generosity or sense enough to appreciate or turn to account.

## CHAPTER V.

### EN ROUTE.

**T**HE Blakes' third winter in Cavendish Terrace was creeping to a close. Early violets made Mrs. Keegan's shop fragrant, and the breezes that swept the back window again began to tell of spring. Honor had begun to look upon that dull colourless life as one which should continue for ever. Miss Matilda Little's attendance had been discontinued, for want of funds on Mrs. Blake's part, long ago, and Honor had read all Mrs. Doherty's books, and almost, it seemed to herself, thought all her own thoughts, so barren and cramped became her mental powers within that narrow boundary line.

Listless dreaming began to fill up her whole life, partly from the effects of want of mental stimulus, and partly from those of insufficient



food and exercise on her growing frame. She grew physically indolent, and day by day the plans she had once formed of going forth in the world to help her mother by her work died away into nothing. Mrs. Blake had, it is true, pooh-poohed them when proposed, and Newton and Conny had been angry, and said Honor wanted to 'disgrace' them, so she said to herself she had 'nothing to do,' and therefore allowed herself to do nothing but nurse the malady that was consuming her heart. She would sit and weep for long hours over the remembrance of Kildaggan, of her father, of Richard, and of their fallen fortunes ; and the greatest indulgence she knew was to be left at home alone to have 'a good cry.'

Any household task or nursery work put on her was done listlessly and lazily, and Mrs. Blake's acquaintances, while they admired the brisk pretty Conny, pitied her mother, and not without reason, for having 'such an awkward indolent daughter as the other.'

Poor Honor ! who would have asked no better lot than work and self-sacrifice, had any one ever shown her how to attain thereto. But all

this time her liberation was at hand, and from a quarter whence she little looked for any good. Before the May blossoms had whitened the hedgerows about Kildaggan, where her sad fancies loved to wander, Newton returned one evening from a tea-party at Mrs. Bull's, eager and excited. He had there met a Mr. Simons, a converted Jew, who had been travelling in the service of a Missionary Society, and had just returned from a journey through Spain and the south of France.

His clever word-photographs of foreign lands caught the boy's fancy, and his descriptions of the long summers and clear air of these flowery climes brought visions of new strength to the poor invalid, who was pining wearily through the damp Irish spring that had succeeded a very bitter winter. Newton felt sure that if he could only enjoy a more genial climate, health would return to him.

Mrs. Blake was at first horrified at the proposal—it would cost so much to go abroad, she feared; but Newton reminded her how cheap Mr. Simons had said everything was there, and Conny, who was greatly pleased with the plan,

joined eagerly in the calculation. In house-rent and meat alone they would save their travelling expenses during the first six months, and after that all the saving would be clear gain, she proved. Mrs. Blake wavered, but she never wavered long where Newton's wishes were in the balance; and before she went to bed that night her consent was given, on the condition that Newton's medical adviser approved the change for him.

That gentleman, when consulted, said he believed it to be the best thing possible for the boy: change was almost certain to do him good, and could do him no harm. Then Mr. Simons was appealed to as to the exact destination of the journey. Mr. Morgan, who was taken into council, gave his opinion very strongly as to the absolute necessity of a fixed decision on this point before they started. A few years' residence in some quiet part of the Continent, he thought, might prove not an unwise, and possibly an economical, change for Mrs. Blake and her family, but aimless wandering hither and thither, or anything like a tour, was not to be thought of for a moment

—it would swallow her income for a year in a month.

All things taken into consideration, Mr. Simons advised Bayonne as a suitable spot. There, or in the neighbouring watering-place of Biarritz, except in the height of the summer season, apartments were very reasonable, he said, the necessaries of life equally so, and the climate almost as genial as that beyond the Pyrenees; while in many respects Mrs. Blake would find France a more agreeable residence than Spain.

Chief among the advantages to be had at Bayonne would be free Protestant worship, in the French form; and Mr. Simons promised Mrs. Blake an introduction to the pastor there, Monsieur Voisin, an excellent man, who spoke English fluently.

It may seem strange that the utter ignorance of French shared by the whole Blake family, with the exception of the little Honor had picked up from Miss Matilda and Charles XII., in no way damped their ardour or presented any difficulty to their minds. The Blakes seldom reasoned, and now the whole household

was in such a delightful ferment of preparation that it would have been very hard to make any of the young people see aught objectionable in the new project.

Mrs. Blake alone bemoaned herself occasionally over the troubles of packing and the unprofitable results of the sale of her furniture, but she was consoled by seeing how Newton seemed to acquire new energies from the excitement. He actually bestirred himself to assist in their preparations, which Conny briskly and helpfully hurried to completion.

Conny was greatly delighted. It sounded so nice to be able to bid her companions at Mr. Bull's class farewell, telling them, 'We are going abroad for a couple of years for my brother's health;' but beyond this lay visions of great and substantial advantages to be derived from her travels. She had heard that even awkward, ugly girls were improved by French 'style' and French toilets. It would not be her fault if she did not reap some good there also.

She made up her mind, too, that she would learn French. Honor should teach her, and she was very civil to Honor, and made her give

her lessons in the evening, when the day's packing was over.

Nor was Honor less charmed than the others. Her sensitive heart grieved a little over the thought of leaving the land of her birth, the land of her father's grave ; but then Cavendish Terrace was not Kildaggan : exile had lost half its sting when she said farewell to the latter.

To see new lands, to visit sites consecrated by song and story, one must not only be young like Honor Blake, but, like her, gifted with an imagination that has never yet been satisfied with any material food, to realize what all this was to her.

She also suddenly found herself promoted to a position of importance in the household, as the sole possessor of the little family stock of French. Honor had terrible doubts that her book-knowledge would not avail her much in practice, but the common voice nominated her the family interpreter, and all she could do was diligently to study her dictionary and vocabulary, until at length she began to think she could understand what was said to her, and certainly speak a little.

All went on pleasantly thus till the day before that fixed for the commencement of the voyage. Then Newton, who had over-exerted himself and caught cold, became ill, and had to go to bed. But he would not hear of any delay; and Charlie, who, boy-like, had greatly rejoiced in the general confusion, and had betokened his satisfaction after his own fashion by a jubilee of noise and mischief, fired his pop-gun through a looking-glass, thereby diminishing the sum Mrs. Blake expected to receive for her furniture more than was at all agreeable to her. Honor was not near Charlie when this happened. She was reading in her room, and her sister was out paying a farewell visit to Mrs. Bull. Newton was asleep, and Mrs. Blake, hearing the noise in the hall, called to Honor to go down-stairs to stop it, lest it should wake her brother.

Poor Charlie, terrified at what he had done, made matters worse by denying it, and in spite of the evidence of both Mary Anne and the auctioneer's man, who was removing the glass when the accident occurred, he stoutly held by this assertion. Honor, who felt the charge of

falsehood against a Blake to be much more serious than the loss of the glass, took Charlie's part indignantly, and, not till overborne by the testimony of Mr. Keegan, who, coming to the door at the moment, had seen the accident, did she unwillingly confess herself in the wrong.

Mrs. Blake, irritated less by Charlie's fault than by the loss her pocket had sustained, and by Newton's sleep having been broken, laid all the blame on Honor, and, though she placed Charlie in punishment, it was too evident that the cause of her anger against him was the broken mirror, and not his want of truth.

Poor Honor felt the latter grievously. The shame of *a Blake* being convicted of a lie crushed her to the earth; how glad she was they were leaving Dublin she could not say, for she felt as if she never could look Mr. Keegan or Mary Anne in the face again.

Neither her mother nor her sister understood her feeling on this score, and had she tried to explain it they would have ridiculed it, as Charlie did all her attempts to make him see his fault in its true light. The next morning



was wet and gloomy, and ceaseless rain fell as the Blakes proceeded to the North Wall, whence their steamer was to sail to London. Newton was more than usually suffering and peevish, Mrs. Blake plaintive and cross, Charlie was in disgrace, and Conny sulky, because her mother would not allow her to keep out her best frock for the journey. Only one 'inside car' was ordered for the party, their luggage having preceded them under charge of Mr. Keegan's boy. Honor and Charlie were to have walked, but Mrs. Blake said the morning was too wet, and insisted upon the whole party squeezing into the car, in spite of the driver's remonstrances and Newton's complaints.

Nor was the continuation of their journey much more agreeable. The steamer was dirty and ill provided for passengers, the whole party were very sea-sick, and a more miserable-looking cargo was seldom landed in London than they were, when on the fifth afternoon of their voyage they were unshipped at the Docks. Lodgings had been secured for them by Mr. Morgan, in a house where he had himself previously had rooms, and, though not in a fashion-

able locality, and rather dingy, they were clean and comfortable. Tea was soon prepared in the back drawing-room appropriated to their use, and as the servant brought it in she handed Mrs. Blake a letter, which she said had come by post the day before. It ran thus :—

‘ MY DEAR MRS. BLAKE,—A letter from Mr. Morgan has just informed me you are to pass through London on your way to the Continent this week. I greatly regret that I did not know this sooner, as, though I could not have offered you rooms in my house, I should have been glad to have you nearer me than the address he has given me. But as he says you have sailed from Dublin, and that your rooms are ready for you, there is no help for it. I am so unfortunate as to be confined to the house with a cold, or I should come to call on you, but I hope you will waive ceremony, and bring all your children to spend the day after your arrival, and every day till you leave England, with me. It is long since I have seen any one bearing the name of Blake, and I am anxious to make acquaintance with your

children.—Believe me to be, my dear Mrs. Blake, yours very sincerely,

HONOR TRACY.

‘WESTBOURNE TERRACE.

‘*P.S.*—I know one of your boys is an invalid. If you will let me know when to expect you I will send my brougham for him and you.’

Mrs. Blake read the above aloud, Conny looking over her shoulder.

‘It is out of the question,’ growled Newton; ‘*I* can’t go anywhere;’ and indeed it was evident that rest was what the boy most urgently needed.

Conny’s face grew long, and her pretty lips were compressed by vexation, but she could offer no valid argument to induce her mother to accept the invitation.

‘How could we go?’ said Mrs. Blake; ‘the children are not fit to be seen!’ which was true, especially of Charlie, whose destructive propensities regarding clothes were quite out of proportion to his mother’s means of renewing his wardrobe.

Conny sighed; *she* could have gone quite

well. She was always 'fit to be seen,' but those horrid children and Honor always stood in her way like this, she muttered. She did not however show her temper openly to her mother and Newton, but, after the letter declining Lady Tracy's invitation was irrevocably gone, she vented her disappointment on Honor in their own room, and kept her weary sister awake half the night by dwelling on her wrongs.

Mrs. Blake's purse compelling her to economize in the matter of lodgings, Charlie slept in the room with the girls, and the first part of Conny's scoldings was addressed to the boy, who paid no attention to it, and went to sleep while she talked. Honor was more vulnerable, and as she was herself quite as much disappointed as Conny at not being able to accept the invitation, her sister's upbraidings bore for her the added sting of injustice.

## CHAPTER VI.

LADY TRACY.

**T**HE next day was wet, so was the ensuing morning, and as none of the Blakes had anything to do or anything to read, they were not a lively party, and Honor began to wonder how people could like to live in London, if all London resembled the view of it their windows gave them. Only Mrs. Blake's room looked on the front of the house, and Newton was asleep there, with the shutters closed most of the day.

The weather cleared on the second afternoon, and Conny coaxed her mother to take her for a walk. Charlie went with them, to keep him out of mischief, while Honor remained with Newton and Emma.

Mrs. Blake had not been very long absent

when the servant brought Honor a card inscribed,

MISS WEDDERBURN.

‘The lady is below in a brougham, Miss,’ said the girl. ‘I told her Mrs. Blake was out, but that you were at home, and she wants to see you.’

‘Ask her to come up-stairs,’ replied Honor, going into the drawing-room, where in a minute or two the servant ushered a well-dressed, nice-looking girl of three or four and twenty, who shook hands with Honor cordially.

‘I am Isabel Wedderburn,’ she said, ‘a sort of cousin of yours. I live with Lady Tracy, who is my aunt. She is so sorry she cannot come out to visit your mother, and that she did not receive her letter till this morning, but if your brother is really too ill to allow you all to come, she wants you and your sister to spend to-morrow with us.’

Honor’s cheeks flushed with pleasure. Her companion was so kind, and spoke with such a sweet accent, so different from anything Honor had ever heard before,—for Mrs. Octavius Bull, though she scorned the ‘brogue’ of her husband’s people, spoke harsh Somersetshire.

Then Miss Wedderburn's dress was so pretty, and her shawl, when Honor touched it as she shook hands, was so soft, as soft as the nice kid glove that felt so pleasant to hold, and some of her clothes must have come out of a scented case, for a sweet perfume hung in the air about her.

Honor felt it would be ecstatic pleasure to spend a whole day with such a 'beautiful young lady' as, childlike, she would have designated Isabel, and when to this was added the pleasure of seeing Lady Tracy, of whom she had heard so much, the promised treat seemed too great to be realized.

Honor faltered in her answer; *she* would be so very very glad to go, and so she was sure would Conny, but mamma was out.

'I fear I cannot await her return,' said Miss Wedderburn, 'but you must tell her my aunt will be much disappointed if you do not come. Is your sick brother up? May I see him?'

No; Newton was in bed and asleep just now. And then Miss Wedderburn asked her how many brothers and sisters she had, and was introduced to little Emmy, whom she took

on her knee, and kissed; and talked pleasantly of Honor's coming continental trip, regretting she had never been in the south of France, except passing through it, though she knew Paris and Italy.

She told Honor that if her mother's answer was posted before six o'clock it would be delivered in Westbourne Terrace at eight next morning, and that Lady Tracy would, if it were favourable, send her trusted man-servant to convey the girls to her house, soon after ten o'clock.

Honor clasped the soft kid glove again, and the sweet perfume breathed round her as Miss Wedderburn bade her good-bye, kissing her lightly on her forehead as she did so.

Never had the time of her mother's and Conny's absence lagged so before; never, as it seemed, did so many people knock at the street door, each to prove a fresh disappointment. At last they came, and Honor told of her visitor and her errand.

Mrs. Blake was at first inclined to demur; the next day was Saturday, and they were to sail for France on Monday; how could she



spare the girls? But Conny overruled all objections in her own clever way, and even, by a fiction about the hour, got her mother to write a letter accepting Lady Tracy's invitation before she went to Newton's room, a letter which Conny, under Charlie's escort, conveyed herself to the nearest post-office. The result showed her wisdom. When Newton heard that his sisters were going out without him, he lamented it as a great injury. Newton, when ailing, was only happy so long as he felt that the whole family was in attendance on him, and the idea of any of them absenting themselves for an entire day made him sob and cry like a baby.

Mrs. Blake would have recalled her consent had it not been irrevocable. Conny pleaded fatigue, and retired to her room as soon as tea was over, and Honor was left to bear the brunt of Newton's ill-temper, which, as he had been asleep all day, he was sufficiently wakeful to indulge in for several hours.

Meanwhile Conny was in her glory. How glad she was now she had not worn her best frock in the steamer! True, it was only

mousseline-de-laine, but it fitted her well, and was perfectly clean and fresh. Her bonnet was ugly and common, but she had seen some blonde bonnet caps, such as were then worn, in a shop not far off, and when she went to post her mother's letter she had expended a shilling on one. Her mother had given her the shilling to buy a cake for Newton's tea, but Conny had told the baker to send the cake, and put it in the account with the bread; and she trusted to escape blame by being out of the way next morning when the servant brought her mother's daily account. She now, after papering her ringlets more carefully than usual, sat down, and cleverly placed the new cap inside the bonnet, and then reviewed her wardrobe. Her gloves were only silk, but they were new, and of a pretty shade. Conny had coaxed her mother out of them, to wear on her farewell visit to Mrs. Bull. Her shoes were tidy enough; but the great fault of her toilet was, she felt, her mantle. This was a cape or 'cardinal,' of the same material as her dress, made in an antiquated fashion by a *protégée* of Mrs. Bull's, and extremely awkward

and ungraceful. Conny mused a while, and at last the little genius unravelled the difficulty.

When Honor came to bed she found the door bolted, and when Conny, after a parley, opened it, Honor was extremely astonished to find her mother's largest trunk, packed with so much pains in Dublin, open, and the contents strewn about the room.

'I am looking for mamma's lace shawl,' said Conny; and she drew out the garment, a shawl of black Spanish lace, nearly the only handsome thing Mrs. Blake possessed.

'What are you going to do with it?' asked Honor.

'To wear it to-morrow, of course.'

'Did mamma allow you?'

'You need not be so spiteful,' retorted Conny. 'It won't do you any harm for me to look nice;' thus silencing generous Honor in the way Miss Constance's experience had taught her was more effectual than any other.

If only Conny could have gone alone, she thought to herself, without her ugly, awkward sister; but, as that was not possible, the next best thing was to show Lady Tracy and Miss

Wedderburn how superior she was to Honor ! So she laid aside the Spanish lace carefully, re-packed and locked the trunk, not disdaining Honor's assistance in this, and the sisters then went to bed.

‘ May I wear your lace shawl, mamma ? ’ asked Conny next morning, as she was about to leave the breakfast-room, while her mother reminded her that Lady Tracy's servant must not be kept waiting.

‘ My shawl ! Where is it ? ’

‘ In the leather trunk in our room, ’ responded ready Conny, keeping within the letter of the truth.

‘ I distinctly remember telling Honor to lay it in my large trunk, ’ said her mother.—‘ You are very careless, Honor, and really do not deserve to be indulged by going out to-day.—Of course you may wear it, Conny, as it is out ; but take care of it. I particularly wished to carry it in a well-secured trunk, but Honor is so provoking. ’

For a moment Conny thought of ‘ improving this occasion ’ so as to get Honor kept at home, but she doubted whether under such provoca-

tion even her long-suffering sister might not tell the truth, so she thought it wisest to hold her tongue, and ran up-stairs to equip herself.

Lady Tracy's staid man-servant put the girls into a cab, and mounted on the box, and they drove westward through the streets, shining that day in the pleasant sunlight. And now Honor began to feel she was indeed in London. Those gorgeous shops, those large houses with the plate-glass windows, those streets, even at that early hour crowded with noisy life—she had never seen aught to compare with this before, never even dreamt of it. And then among the moving crowd she noticed so often girls of her own age and older—young ladies doing a quiet hour's shopping in Oxford Street, a girls' school on their way to walk in the Park, a group of fair equestrians, too, bound for an early canter in the Row—all girls of Honor's own class in life : no better born, most likely, but how differently bred ! girls who were well educated, trained in all social graces, most likely taught many accomplishments, and last, if not least, so carefully dressed !

Honor was not envious, but her heart died

as she pictured the contrast, were she and these more favoured damsels placed side by side.

Conny, meantime, from her window of the cab, noticed all Honor did, not without some stray glances at the male part of the creation; and thus ran her thoughts—‘I am prettier than any of them, and if I had only money I could dress as well. I saw that young man on the omnibus point to us, and he spoke to his friend, and now they are looking after our cab. I know he said, “What a pretty girl!” When I am rich, I will have a bonnet exactly like that lady in the carriage, and it will suit me much better than it does her.’

The sisters were roused from their respective reveries by the cab stopping at Lady Tracy’s house, where their attendant led them up-stairs into a handsome drawing-room. Honor’s friend of yesterday was at the piano at one end of the room; at the other, near a back window looking on a small conservatory, sat an elderly lady, who rose as they entered.

She was very small, smaller than either of the girls, with an erect, slender figure, dressed

in very rich black silk ; hair whiter than even the snowy cap that covered it, large bright eyes, and a soft peach-blossom complexion, and little white hands, like those of a girl of eighteen. Honor thought she looked like a good fairy ; and she recalled with wonder having heard her mother say Lady Tracy had not been ' a pretty girl.' Mrs. Blake had been a Dublin belle, and deemed herself a competent judge of looks ; but were her faded figure and discontented face placed beside Lady Tracy's now, there would have been little doubt that all observers would award the palm of beauty to the elder lady.

Lady Tracy welcomed her young kinswomen kindly. She did not kiss them (Isabel did), but her hand-shake was, Honor felt, worth many people's kisses 'in the friendship it spoke. The large eyes travelled over them both from head to foot, took in the pretty little form wrapped gracefully in its lace drapery, and surmounted by those glorious curls, and the sweet complaisant self-possessed face beneath them ; and then dwelt for a moment on that other, different figure—the clumsy overgrown girl of sixteen, in her ill-fitting raiment, awkward blushes

mantling on her cheeks and forehead, while her wistful eyes seemed to plead for pardon for her shortcomings.

Honor felt as if that look of Lady Tracy's somehow went much deeper than the outside—went through the ugly mousseline-de-laine cape, right into her heart, and read what was there. Miss Wedderburn took the girls to her room, to take off their bonnets, and then they returned to her aunt. Neither of the sisters had ever been in a house so well furnished and well appointed before, and both enjoyed it thoroughly. Conny thought with contempt of Mrs. Octavius Bull's 'best drawing-room,' which she used once to admire, as she compared with its stiff, shining, tasteless furniture the graceful atmosphere of Lady Tracy's home. Honor trod on the soft carpets and looked at the pretty things about her with the sensitive pleasure of a soul endowed in no common degree with the love of the beautiful, and to whom the indulgence of such taste had always been denied.

That was a very delightful morning. Isabel Wedderburn, with genuine good-nature, exerted herself to amuse the Irish girls, and, so barren



of all interest had their lives been hitherto, they were not hard to please. She sang and played to them, and showed Conny how to finger the piano, and made her try a song, and praised her voice, while Lady Tracy, seeing Honor's longing glances wandering to a table covered with illustrated books, sat down by it with her, and for nearly an hour the girl enjoyed the richest treat of her life in looking over these, while Lady Tracy talked to her.

Honor did not know that the conversation of the old lady who sat by her was wont to find ready listeners among some of the highest intellects in Europe. As little did she suspect how Lady Tracy was drawing forth her own girlish mind, and noting the treasures that lay there.

Then Miss Wedderburn, at her aunt's desire, took the girls to a bagatelle-table, and taught them the game, and, when that was finished, and she had shown them her needlework, she led them into the little conservatory, where they were still lingering when the dinner-bell sounded.

'We dine early to-day,' said Lady Tracy, and they went down-stairs.

The dinner, both in itself and in the manner of its serving, was as new and pleasant to the girls as any other of that day's experiences. While they ate their fruit Lady Tracy said, 'Isabel will take one of you for a drive, if you like. There is only room for two in the brougham, so one must stay with me; which shall it be?'

Miss Wedderburn looked at Honor, and said, 'The eldest must have her choice, I suppose, aunt?'

Honor would have very much enjoyed to drive with Miss Wedderburn, and to see something more of that brilliant end of London at which she had peeped in the morning, but ere she could answer Conny put in, 'I should like to stay with you, *so much*, Lady Tracy, but driving in a close carriage always makes Honor's head ache. I know mamma would not like it.'

As if (supposing the above assertion to be true) Mrs. Blake would have greatly cared whether Honor's head ached or not!

Honor reddened over her eyebrows, but did not speak.

‘She does not like to say so,’ went on Conny,  
‘lest you should think her rude ; but I am sure  
you will forgive her, Miss Wedderburn.’

‘Certainly,’ replied Isabel ; ‘then if you will  
come let us put on our bonnets at once.’

## CHAPTER VII.

HONOR FINDS A FRIEND AND HAS A PEEP  
AT A HERO.

**H**ONOR watched Miss Wedderburn and Conny get into the brougham, which drove away, and then she stood at the window looking at some other carriages receiving their fair freight from neighbouring houses.

The feeling of the morning returned to her with tenfold force. How elegant, how lady-like all these women were! How they stood, and moved, and sat down in the right places, and wore their clothes in the right way! If she were to try to step into a carriage like that she would show her ankles, she knew, and most likely stumble on her frock and tear it! It was too true, she confessed, with a heavy sigh, what Phil used to say long ago,—she would never be like other people! That girl who bowed so

gracefully to Lady Tracy as she passed the window could not be much older than herself; and what a difference!

She was startled by the old lady's voice saying behind her—

‘Don’t be cast down, my dear! You have got something much better than it all.’

Honor turned round astonished, and Lady Tracy went on—

‘You can’t put on a shawl, or bow from a carriage, I know, but you have got *a soul*. I am a very good judge, for I once had one myself. Don’t look so surprised. Theologically, of course, all people have souls, but practically I assure you that is a mistake. As I said just now, I once had one myself, so I know all about it. Come and sit down by me, my dear, and I will tell you a very old story, that the sight of you has brought back to my mind.’

Honor obeyed, and seated herself, full of attention, on an ottoman by the side of her kinswoman, but the old lady did not speak again for several minutes. She kept her eyes fixed on something outside the window. Honor guessed rightly that they saw nothing there,

but were busy among scenes and years far far away. Then she turned toward Honor, and looked at her also for a time, out of the same dreamy eyes, with something of compassion in them, and then she spoke :—

‘ You remind me of myself, child, as I was so many years ago,—I generally forget all about it. I am not going to give you a detail of all my life. Like you I was well-born, and like all of our race, I was of course poor.

‘ I married young, bringing nothing to my husband but such a wealth of love and warm-heartedness and earnest strivings after all things good and high, that I can sometimes hardly realize that the girl I remember was I myself.

‘ He too was poor in those days, and our lot lay for many years in a remote corner of a far-away land, where we made our own world and lived our own lives. This is not what I am going to tell you of; you would not understand or be interested in *that* story yet awhile. During these years I was almost cut off from society, and when I revisited England I was a woman over five-and-twenty in years, but still a mere girl in the ways and usages of the world,

and still with a girl's warm, trusting, loving heart, and such a truthful earnest soul.

‘ But the people I fell among had no gauge among their weights and measures for such things as souls! They esteemed the possession, of course, in a fashionable poet; and a heart was a proper appendage to the lovely heroine of his idylls! But what had a poor little insignificant matron like me to do with such things! I was not in those days altogether wanting in good looks, nor did I lack the love of our sex for what is pretty and graceful. I had as good taste in dress as my neighbours, and could have enjoyed indulging it as much, but, in my simplicity, I deemed it my duty to my absent husband not to spend more of his hard-earned money than I could help; and my children's claims, even for amusement, always counted with me before any wants of my own, and so I went about “dowdy,” and my relations were ashamed of me, and I felt *that* to my heart's core, though I did not quite know the reason.

‘ Child! child! I look back and wonder how all this could ever have caused me the deep and

real anguish I experienced at that time. I had come to Europe very sad and lonely.

‘I was a stranger, with all the anxieties attendant on narrow means, separated from my husband, and in the heart-throes of the great agony of my life. I was about to part from my children for years—to part for ever in this world, as it proved, from the fairest of the flock.’

She stopped a minute, then went on again:—

‘I was thirsting for a little love and sympathy. I had not then got my appetite for the husks. Don’t be shocked, my dear: the “husks” are very good eating when they are properly dressed and well served up,—I do not mean it in a spiritual sense, but in a domestic and social one; but that was one of the things I had not then learned. Every kind word in this strange hard land I had come to would have been like cold water in the desert; but they never gave me one.

‘I was no philosopher, nor was I blind, Honor; and their contempt and slights had barbed stings for me.

‘Maybe they did not mean it should be so; maybe they trusted to my ignorance of the



world not to see that I was asked to their houses at times when none of their grand friends would be there, and that when I was on a visit with them, no creature, except some stray poor relation, was ever invited to meet me; but I knew it all, and understood it, only, in my single-minded humility, I decided, as you would do in like case, Honor, that *they* were right, and that the fault lay in my own unfitness, my own want of something which would have made me their equal. I knew I was deficient in some of the small knowledge daily life in a large society gives. I was a little behind the time in some things as well as in my dress, and I magnified my own shortcomings.

‘How well I recollect the bitter tears I shed over a social mistake of my own, dictated by my kindest feelings. I always shrank, I shrink now, from over-taxing servants, and in the lodgings where my purse then obliged me to live I would have suffered much personal inconvenience rather than have needlessly rung the bell for the weary slave who waited on me.

‘I had also hanging round me a habit people often pick up in India—half I suppose from the

Oriental code of hospitality, half from the desire of an excuse for strolling into the verandah,—so, wishing to do my guests every honour, forgetting how different things are in England, I one day accompanied them to the hall-door. That time no contempt such as women know how to bestow without speaking was enough. The head of the family paid me a special visit for the purpose of pointing out my fault next morning.

‘I am sure he thought he was very kind when he assured me it did not matter “among themselves,” but warned me not to repeat the offence before those who might judge me less charitably.

‘Poor baby that I was! what could I do but weep and half-believe him, when he told me I was “unladylike”! It no more occurred to me then than to him that none but a true lady could have borne all I had to bear from him and his, as I did, and that all *their* conduct to me was dictated by nothing but extreme vulgarity! I know that now! I know that if I had been rich, or the fashion, I might have been guilty of a hundred really

unladylike acts with impunity—it would have been called “eccentricity” at the worst; but of this I had then no idea.

‘I meekly accepted my inferiority, with no feeling of either resentment or envy, but only such sincere grief that I was not more worthy.

‘It all appears absolutely comic to me, now that I know that the girl they so despised was as much their superior in every quality which makes a noble woman as, God help me! she was mine as I am now. Remember this story of mine, Honor, when you feel sad about your own deserts, and don’t take every fool who says he or she is your superior on his or her own valuation.’

Honor had crept nearer to her kinswoman, and was looking up earnestly and lovingly in that old face, which had grown strangely young and soft during the recital.

‘And the end, please?’ she asked timidly, with a child’s hunger after a half-finished story.

‘The end, my dear? Do you not know yet that there are no third volumes in real life? You see the end of me here, and as for my relations, why, we are the best possible friends

now! Why should we not be? I have two thousand a year, and have peeresses on my visiting-list, so of course we are friends! And there is only one person in the world, I think, with whom I would rise and go to my threshold! We are all on the same level now, Honor, the level that looks so grand to you from the outside; but let me tell you, it is the level of vulgar commonplace.'

'And Miss Wedderburn?' persisted Honor—she could not be disappointed of the whole story.

'Isabel, my dear? Why, she is my niece, and lives with me because her father and mother have more than enough of others to keep,—and—why, Honor,' and she gave a little laugh, 'I see what you mean: you are wondering in that little romancing head of yours if Isabel's parents were among the relatives of whom I spoke just now. My dear child, you do not think that makes any difference, or that I have ever once remembered all I have told you in my dealings with her?'

Honor hastened to say she had not thought so.

'No,' said Lady Tracy; 'and in raking up

this old story for your benefit, Miss Honor, I have felt secure that it would go no further. Girls like you do not tell everything that is said to them, I know. I told it you, as I said before, because in you I recognise much of what I was myself; and the chief thing you need to make you, in all essential externals, like the rest of the world, is a little self-confidence.'

'I am glad you think so,' said Honor, and she would have gone on to ask pardon for what she feared must have seemed most impertinent curiosity, but a visitor was announced, to meet whom Lady Tracy rose with much warmth and animation.

The name was one Honor had often heard, but she knew very little about its possessor.

'This is kind, Henry,' said Lady Tracy. 'When do you sail?'

'I leave town to-night,' he said, 'and have just half an hour to spend with you, to say good-bye.'

'Let me introduce to you this young cousin of mine,' she said; 'she is a sister of poor young Richard Blake, whom I think you knew.'

Very kind words accompanied the shake of the hand Honor received, and the ready tears rushed to her eyes as he spoke of the 'gallant youth cut off before his time.'

Then he sat down by Lady Tracy, and they talked together, and Honor listened entranced.

She could not understand all they spoke of ; strange names, strange idioms, and strange customs, to them familiar, made much of their talk dark to her ; but she knew what it was about—that it treated of the destinies of a nation, or rather of many nations in one, from a new point of view, new to the politicians of Europe in these days—from the great basis, not of party politics, as questions of this or that ministry in power, nor of one or other popular orator successful on the hustings or in the House, but of the principles of Right and Wrong applied to government, of evil combated, of good done, by the men of to-day, during their working time, passing on the heritage of the same task to those of to-morrow ; so they spoke, and Honor listened.

At last the visitor rose to say farewell.

Lady Tracy rose too, and accompanied him

through the vestibule to the staircase. As she returned, Honor saw she was wiping her eyes. 'My heart misgives me, child,' she said, 'that I have seen my last of the noblest gentleman on earth. I told you there was but one person I would follow to the threshold—that was he.—Are you tired of my stories, or would you like to hear another?'

Honor declared herself ready for any amount of stories, and the old lady beguiled the next hour by the history of the career of the hero who had just left them.

It has been written by an abler pen than mine, but his own modest epitaph speaks louder and truer than a thousand eulogists, of the man whose only boast was that he had 'tried to do his duty.'<sup>1</sup> After this, Lady Tracy encouraged Honor to talk of her own life—her hopes and feelings, and her home and surroundings. The girl was shy of too much confidence as to the latter.

<sup>1</sup> I suppose most writers who have tried to borrow a leaf from history to weave in their garland of fiction have found that *dates* are stubborn and unpleasant things. I am quite aware that when indulging Honor Blake with a peep at one of Nature's noblemen I take a liberty with facts, as he was not in England at this time.

She was too proud, too loyal-hearted, to tell the whole truth, even to herself, far less to the old kinswoman, kind as she was.

Her own inner life she spoke of more freely, but in her 'blundering awkward way,' poor Honor felt,—only half expressing what she meant, and that not gracefully. Her listener was kind, but said little in reply, except a few words of counsel as to books she advised Honor to read.

After a while tea was brought in and discussed, and then another visitor entered, a man about six-and-twenty, with large bright eyes like Lady Tracy's.

He kissed the old lady tenderly, and she introduced him as 'My son.'

'I wish you had come sooner, Tom,' she said.

'I could not do it, I assure you, mother; I only got away by the 12.10 train. Stanford wanted me very much to stay till to-morrow, but I knew you would be anxious, as I had promised you to come to-day.'

Lady Tracy smiled.

'Thank you, my dear,' she said; 'it was not for



myself I spoke just now; if you had been earlier I should have sent this little cousin with you to see something of the things to be seen in London. She has been in Ireland all her life, and goes abroad to-morrow, and she has been cheated out of her drive this afternoon (how did Lady Tracy know that?), and forced to sit indoors with me instead.'

'Dear me, I am so sorry,' said the pleasant manly voice; 'where's Isabel?'

'Driving with *her* sister, another cousin.—And by the way, Honor, are you a good walker?'

'Yes; very good.'

'Of course you are. Would you rather walk home with your cousin Tom, or wait for the brougham, and drive back with Constance?'

Honor was silly enough to blush as she said, 'I would rather walk,' and to feel that she did so, which made her confusion worse, but both Lady Tracy and her son good-naturedly ignored it, and the former said—

'Then Tom will show you some of the streets, at least, of London, on your way; but the worst of it is, if you walk you must start at once—so go and put on your bonnet.'

Honor obeyed, and, returning to the drawing-room, received a kind farewell from Lady Tracy.

‘Will you write to me, my dear? I do not want a formal letter in your best hand; but, by and bye, when you feel inclined, send me a long “schree” all about what you think and want. And here,’ she continued, putting something into Honor’s hand; ‘I told Isabel to get Constance anything she wished for as a keepsake from me; as you have not had the opportunity of a choice to-day you must make it afterwards. I daresay you will think of something to remind you of to-day.’

Honor could scarcely speak her thanks. ‘Not for the present, so much,’ she stammered, ‘as for being so good, and talking to me. I mean, of course, I like the present very much, thank you,’ and she reddened over her ears at her own awkwardness.

‘I understand, child; don’t fret yourself by thinking I don’t. Good-bye.—Take care of her, Tom, and if she is tired put her in a hansom.’

Then Honor and Mr. Tracy passed downstairs together, and when he apologized for

leaving her in the hall for a minute while he went into the back parlour to seek his gloves, she fancied he meant to give her time to look at his mother's gift, because he gave a glance at her hand first, saying, 'Had you not best put that away?' she was sure he held his gloves while he spoke.

It was a £10 note, a fabulous sum to Honor, who never possessed any money. As many shillings, all her own to spend, would have been luxury, as many pence an indulgence; but she never thought of that.

The landlady's bill her mother had been sighing over that morning, and some costly indulgences Newton had craved, seemed represented by that wonderful bit of paper, so she stuffed it very safely into the bosom of her dress, smoothed her ugly 'cardinal' over it, and accompanied her cousin into the street. At first Honor felt as if she were uglier and more awkward than ever, as if her frock was so short, and her boots so thick, and as if her faded bonnet and darned silk gloves had never looked half so shabby; but Mr. Tracy did not seem to care about this at all.

He was only full of self-reproach that he had not chanced to come home earlier, 'for it is too late for everything now. I suppose you might not stay out so late as to go to the theatre?'

Honor shook her head.

'If I had been here two hours sooner I might have taken you to the Royal Academy or the Zoological Gardens. What would you have liked best?'

'Please don't trouble about me,' she said simply; 'I have never been accustomed to go to any amusements, and I do not know anything about them. I am very happy walking through the streets and seeing the shops.'

'The shops! you like looking at the shops? So do I—at some, at least; so we will indulge ourselves in that. But,' he added, 'won't you like to go *into* some of them, to buy something? I am a very good person for that, I assure you—no one more patient at a milliner's, so don't be afraid to say so.'

Poor Honor blushed scarlet again. No doubt he thought she wanted the renovating hand of a milliner sadly; and she too *would*

have liked to spend some of that £10 on a few tidy clothes for once. But the sum was sacred, and she very nearly blurted out, 'I have no money.' She stopped herself just in time, and substituted—

'I have no—thank you.' A rather lame sentence, but Tom Tracy, seeing she was disturbed by something, good-naturedly changed the subject.

'Which shop-windows do you like best?'

'Pictures, I think,' said Honor, 'and skins—furs.'

'Print-shops to begin with? Well, that is my weakness too, so we will go down Bond Street, and then try for a peep at some of the fur-shops, though I am sure I forget where they are. The Hudson's Bay Company, is not that the thing?'

'Never mind that,' replied Honor; 'the print-shops'—she laid aside her own childish expression—'will be quite enough for to-day.'

So they walked by Oxford Street and Bond Street, enjoying a little art exhibition of their own; and Mr. Tracy told her a great deal more about pictures than she ever knew before, and

was himself surprised to find what a fund of deep thought and intelligence lay in the uncultured, untidy child by his side.

The twilight was closing ere they had walked half their allotted distance, and, at the corner of Tottenham-Court Road, Mr. Tracy hailed a hansom. Just at that moment his mother's brougham passed them, with Isabel and Constance inside.

Isabel touched the check-string as she saw them, and the coachman drew up by the pavement. At the first glance Honor hardly knew who Miss Wedderburn's companion was—Constance was metamorphosed with the perennial magic of a new bonnet : such a pretty bonnet as only a good milliner can produce—stylish and yet simple, setting off, not making more shabby by contrast, as a more vulgar effort would have done, the mousseline-de-laine frock, and blending well with Mrs. Blake's Spanish lace. The pretty face shone out bewitchingly from its new setting, and she had also been to a hair-dresser's and had her golden ringlets arranged in the newest fashion, and wore a well-fitting pair of kid gloves.

No envy stirred Honor's heart as she looked at her sister, only it had sunk down like a stone when the brougham stopped. This was, she very much feared, the end of her pleasant evening, of her expected drive in the hansom.

'We can make room for you, Honor,' said Miss Wedderburn, as soon as she had exchanged greetings with her cousin. 'Your sister says you will be tired.'

'Plenty of room,' repeated Constance, squeezing herself into a corner. 'Mamma would not wish you to walk.'

Before Honor could reply, Mr. Tracy answered for her—

'Many thanks; but we will not crowd you, nor yet tire Miss Blake. I had called a cab before you stopped.'

'You are very good, I am sure,' replied Conny, in her most old-mannered and elder-sisterly way, 'but mamma would not wish us to take you and Miss Wedderburn out of your way. Honor and I can go home together—in the cab.'

The last words were spoken after a pause. It was hard to Conny to relinquish the honour and glory of driving home in that smart

brougham, but it would have been worse to leave Honor the undisturbed possession of a 'beau' like Mr. Tom Tracy.

'Impossible!' replied the gentleman, stopping Isabel, who was about to speak, 'quite impossible! I am not to be done out of my drive!'

'Then,' gasped Constance, 'let me go in the cab, Miss Wedderburn. It is getting cold for Honor, and she is so delicate.'

'It is you who must be delicate if you feel cold this evening, my dear,' replied Miss Wedderburn. 'You know you said the brougham is likely to make your sister feel ill.—We had best let it be as it is, Tom, I think. I suppose I shall see you again this evening?'

'Yes; I shall be at home to bid my mother good-night, not sooner; I have something to do.—Drive on, James.'

Honor felt she had escaped a great privation, and got into the hansom in very good spirits, but they were a little damped when Mr. Tracy said—

'Is your sister older or younger than you?'

'Younger—two years younger.'

'Then why does she dress differently? I



beg your pardon if I have been rude,' as he saw the colour rise to her face.

'Not at all rude,' stammered the girl. 'We do generally have nearly the same things. Of course, if there is anything nicer, Constance has it, because she is pretty. But to-day her bonnet is, I think, your mother's present. Your mother said she was to choose something.'

'I understand, I understand,' said Mr. Tracy; 'and you will get yours in France, I suppose?'

Honor did not contradict him, and he talked on other subjects till she forgot her embarrassment. He made the cabman drive them a long round, to show her more of the lighted streets, which she looked at with childish pleasure; and the brougham had been at Albert Terrace, and driven away again, long before they arrived.

Constance was on the steps to meet them.

'Will you come up-stairs, Mr. Tracy?' she said; 'mamma will like to see you.'

She still had her bonnet on, and a pair of dainty boots besides, which Honor had not, of course, seen when they first met her. She looked wonderfully pretty as she marshalled Mr. Tracy up the dingy stairs, and Honor fol-

lowed, wondering, for she believed her mother would have preferred not to display her poverty before her richer relations.

Constance turned, as they reached the drawing-room door—‘Will you go up-stairs, Honor, and ask mamma to come down to see Mr. Tracy?’ and Honor obeyed sorrowfully. She knew what this meant, and that she should not leave Newton’s room again that evening, not even to say farewell to her kind escort. It was even so. Newton was exceptionally cross, and Mrs. Blake, after scolding Honor severely for asking a gentleman in, when she knew what poor rooms they had, put on a tidy dress and went down-stairs, ordering Honor to stay with her brother.

The girl, no wiser than ever as to fitting time and place, pulled out the £10 with haste, and gave it to her mother, all trembling with excitement.

Mrs. Blake took it to the window and looked at it. ‘She did not send this to me?’ she asked in a half-offended tone.

‘Oh no, dear mamma ; she gave it to me as I was coming away, and she gave Conny a bonnet and boots, I think.’

‘Yes, I know ; little enough too, out of her wealth. How did you carry this home, Honor?’

‘Inside my dress,’ said Honor, trembling.

‘How dreadfully careless ! I must say Lady Tracy might have known better than to trust it to you ; if she meant to give it she might have asked her son to carry it. It is a wonder you did not lose it ;’ and after locking the note safely in a portmanteau, the mother left the room, telling Honor to look after the children, and not allow them to disturb Newton.

Charlie and Emmy were playing together in a corner ; Newton in bed, and he sullenly refused some offers Honor made to talk to him, crying out that no one cared for him. He was left at home to suffer while his sisters went out to spend the day, and came home with presents !

‘I brought home £10 to get things for you, Newton,’ remonstrated Honor.

‘I don’t care ! I don’t want it,’ he cried ; ‘no one ever gives me £10. No one cares for me !’

Honor turned away angrily, and sat down by the window. Charlie and Emmy were becoming noisy and quarrelsome, but she did not heed them. She gave way to her disgust at Newton’s

selfishness, and, according to her wont, abstracted her mind as best she could from her distasteful surroundings, and took refuge in that world of imagination which so often seemed her only possession.

It was not on her walk with Mr. Tracy, nor yet on his mother's confidences, she fixed as subject for those glowing thoughts. The visitor of this afternoon, that face whose every feature was traced in undying colours on her memory, that strange mysterious romance of virtue and power—a Christian soldier victorious among a heathen nation, blending into a Christian statesman, subduing kingdoms for their own good—the dream entranced her, and broke forth in those unequal verses, part childish doggrel, part gleaming with the true poetic metal, wherein Honor was wont to hold converse with herself.

The first poetic burst had exhausted itself. The excitement of the past day, Lady Tracy's conversation, her walk and drive home, all the new scenes and new people, were sure to have produced such a burst, and she ran through the opening verses of her poem with ease and brilliancy; but then she came to a standstill—the

reign of the doggrel was asserting itself once more.

She was searching for an appropriate rhyme for 'hero,' when a frightful noise scattered her ideas.

There was a crash, a gushing sound, and a succession of shrieks from the voices of all three children. Honor rose angrily, and turned to the room.

The washing-stand, which stood close to the bed, was overturned, and under it lay Emmy, screaming and kicking. Charley had nearly disappeared under the bed, but having unwarily gone in feet foremost, Newton had caught him by the hair in one hand, and was buffeting him with the other, Charlie's rear being embarrassed by entanglement in several leather trunk straps and portmanteau covers, which prevented him from either retiring or evading the blows.

'Shame! shame!' cried Honor, first separating the combatants, and then rescuing Emmy, who was wet to the skin.

'It was Charlie knocked it down on me,' sobbed the little thing.

'I was only trying to climb on the top of the

bed to get away from her,' exclaimed Charlie. 'What business had she to bone my cord?'

'You must both go to bed directly,' said Honor.

Charlie evaded this by bolting out of the room, and Honor could not follow him, for Emmy's wet state demanded instant attention. She put the crying child to bed; and her heart sank as she thought of what her mother would say at the sight of the wet clothes.

All the time she was so employed Newton screamed without stopping. Honor was distracted. She dared not leave Emmy to catch cold, and was far from easy about Charlie's whereabouts; but Newton kept on crying out that his bed-clothes were wet—he would be ill with rheumatism, etc. etc.; and the bell, rung by her repeatedly for the help of the maid, brought no response for a long time.

When at length that household drudge appeared, her wrath overcame her politeness. She mopped up the water on the floor, and replaced such of the toilet-china as was not broken—not rudely, though sulkily enough; but when Newton insisted on having his bed made

again, and all the linen and the counterpane changed, because a corner of the bed-clothes had dipped into the water, the maid lost all patience, which, considering that she had, most good-naturedly, assisted in arranging the invalid comfortably for the night, not an hour before, was not to be wondered at.

Bells were ringing in all directions, and four separate laundresses waiting below for settlement, the dishes from three dinners still to be washed, and innumerable boots and shoes, letters and parcels, to be distributed to their several owners, besides the kitchen stairs to be scoured, and a legion of miscellaneous duties performed, before the poor girl could hope to end her week's labour.

The scolding she received from her fiery mistress when she went to seek the linen Newton required did not mend matters, and, while arranging the bed, with angry jerking motions, she muttered some remarks on 'Irish beggars,' which sent the blood of all the Blakes of Kildaggan to Honor's face. It never occurred to her on that occasion, that if the Blakes of Kildaggan had been accustomed to

use their own hands instead of those of other people, even in the menial occupation of making a bed, this, and many other unpleasant situations, might have been avoided.

As soon as Newton was assisted into bed he began to cry again.

‘These are cotton sheets! and torn! Old cotton sheets!! I shall not sleep a bit to-night! I cannot sleep in these sheets!’

‘Then you may sleep on the floor, for they’re the best you’ll get. Missis won’t give no others, and I am not going to ask her for them,’ retorted the maid, and flounced out of the room, slamming the door.

Newton was so angry his cries subsided into an inarticulate gurgle, but Honor lost half of this closing indignity by listening to what was going on below stairs. The back drawing-room bell had been rung three times, all unheeded, during the last few minutes, and now a quick manly step was heard descending the stairs, the hall-door opened and shut, and a cab drove away.

‘Dear me, Honor!’ said Constance, entering as the maid went out, ‘was Sarah here all this



time? We have been ringing for her to open the door for Mr. Tracy, and he had to do it himself after all! I wonder what he will think of us.'

Lady Tracy's morning conversation came back to her mind, and she could not help smiling.

'What are you laughing at?' asked her mother. 'I must say, Honor, there seems to me nothing laughable in the matter. You are very unfeeling and indolent. I think you might have attended to Newton yourself, and allowed the servant to show visitors out of the house.'

Here Newton's voice broke in detailing his wrongs, and fearful indeed was the price Honor now paid for her quarter of an hour in Parnassus.

Newton's disturbed rest and uncomfortable bed, the broken china to swell to-morrow's bill, Emmy's dripping clothes and probable cold,—each, as it burst on Mrs. Blake's cognisance, increased her despair and her reproaches; and when the climax of all came, and it was discovered that Charlie was out on the leads, and

had shut the door of the attic stairs, so as to render his fortress impregnable, the poor lady fairly gave way and sobbed forth her lamentations that she should have such a daughter.

Honor stood with downcast eyes, neither attempting excuse nor exerting herself to mend matters, but Constance was alert in a moment.

‘No one can open the door on to the leads from inside but Mr. Spiggins,’ said Sarah, in reply to her demand for help; ‘and he is at tea with missus in the back parlour, and I daren’t disturb them.’

Mr. Spiggins was the landlady’s son.

‘Don’t cry, mamma,’ said Constance, ‘I will go and fetch Mr. Spiggins.—Honor, do look after Newton, and try to pacify him.’ But Honor stood immovable. An awful vision of Charlie precipitated from the leads, mangled and bleeding in the street, and all through her fault, floated before her eyes and paralysed her limbs. Her knees knocked together, and her tongue clove to her mouth; she could neither speak nor move.

Constance swept by her contemptuously, and proceeded to storm Mrs. Spiggins in her citadel

of the back parlour, and Sarah looked after her, admiring her courage and her beauty.

She still wore the new bonnet, and her eye was bright with what she loved so well,—the consciousness of power. Tap, tap, tap, went the little hand, as deft and shapely in the unwonted kid as though it had never been used to vile Berlin and thread.

‘Who’s there?’ growled a voice, in reply to the second summons. ‘Come in then, can’t you? don’t stand rapping there.’

Mrs. Spiggins, a stout lady in bombazine and a black lace cap, was sitting enveloped in a fragrant atmosphere of tea and muffins opposite Mr. Spiggins, a short spare young gentleman with red hair.

It was from Mrs. Spiggins the voice Constance heard proceeded.

The door opened and the fairest face was projected into the steamy room, framed in the most bewitching of bonnets, and better far in its own wealth of flaxen ringlets. Mr. Spiggins stared aghast. Mrs. Spiggins was silent. A little fairy figure draped in rich black lace followed the face.

Mr. Spiggins rose from his chair ; Mrs. Spiggins suspended a rising speech about those 'Irish lodgers.'

'My mother has sent me, Mrs. Spiggins,' said Constance, and her tone entirely smothered the embryo speech above, 'to express to you her great regret for the trouble and inconvenience you have been caused by my little brother's folly. The truth was, my sister and I had just returned from spending the day with our dear old relation, Lady Tracy, and her son came home with us to see mamma, and we were all so lost in talk of old times (oh Conny!) we left the children alone. I need not say my mother hopes you will not let yourself sustain any actual loss (cunning Conny!—here Mrs. Spiggins curtsied), but it must have been most vexatious to you. As for my poor little brother, we fear he runs the risk of a terrible punishment ; he has gone out on the leads, and shut the door leading to them, and I am about to beg Mr. Spiggins (and here Conny gave a little curtsy, the facsimile of one she had seen Isabel Wedderburn bestow on a house-agent where she had called on some business of her aunt's that day) to

give us his help in the matter. We poor women can do nothing alone.'

Mr. Spiggins had turned crimson over his ears, and rising hastily, searched about for a chisel and hammer in profound but admiring silence.

Mrs. Spiggins was voluble. 'James should go, of course, and open the door, and bring down the poor young gentleman. She was not angry, not she; only a bit vexed that Mr. Newton, as was so *petticular*, had to put up with old cotton sheets; but, by the bye, the laundress had just come, and there would be a linen pair in the basket, and she would take them up herself, for she knew what sick folk were, and how easily they were put off their sleep.'

The inward current of the good lady's thoughts might be thus paraphrased: 'They can't be so poor, or she couldn't go out and buy a new bonnet and gloves all of a sudden like that; and Lady Tracy sounds well; and as for the toilet china, that will go down in the bill, and the jug was cracked before, and the basin can be mended to go with the old jug in the top back bedroom; and after all it is a pity of the

poor sick lad, and I daresay he can't sleep in cotton sheets,'—for Mrs. Spiggins had a heart at bottom, though much overlaid with other superlying matter.

So Constance returned up-stairs, triumphant, followed by Mr. Spiggins, who duly effected the capture of Charlie, and, overcome by another bewildering curtsy and thanks, returned to his tea, while to Sarah's extreme astonishment his mother brought up a pair of fine linen sheets, and with her own hands arranged them on Newton's bed.

'Don't be so sullen, Honor,' said her mother. Honor was trying in vain to hide the tears that would flow at Charlie's escape. 'Go and take the account of the clothes the laundress has just brought home.'

Honor made a mistake in this, and long and stormy was the discussion that ensued, Newton's voice keeping up a chorus of complaints all the time. It was past eleven o'clock before this and many other equally unpleasant tasks were over. At last Newton slept, and at last the house-door closed after the voluble and injured laundress, and Honor retired to her room.

Constance, who had made herself very useful in the late domestic crisis, and who had finally carried the point of an amicable settlement with the laundress, was smoothing out her bonnet-strings, dusting her pretty boots, and drawing out the fingers of her gloves, placing all in readiness to wear at church to-morrow.

‘Here, Honor,’ she said, ‘I forgot to give you this before. Miss Wedderburn gave me my gloves, and here is a pair for you.’

Honor’s heart gave a little bound of joy. Of all the fineries she ever coveted good gloves came first, and Conny’s dainty kids had sorely excited her longing for a similar pair. Conny handed her the parcel, and she opened it joyously.

‘What a pretty colour! prettier than yours, I think,’ and she began to put them on.

‘Take care,’ said Constance. ‘Don’t force them, or you will tear them.’

Force them! Ah! without force or with, they would never go on her hand!

‘Far, far too small for you,’ said Mrs. Blake, who entered at the moment. ‘Why, they are the same number as Conny’s, number six; and your

hand, Honor, is I think larger than mine, and my size always was six and three-quarters. They will do for Conny when those she has are worn out.'

Honor burst into tears as her mother left the room.

'I think you might have told Miss Wedderburn my hand was larger than yours, Conny,' she sobbed.

'How cross you are!' retorted Conny. 'How could I tell your hand was so big? I don't suppose it was my place to dictate to Miss Wedderburn as to what present she was to send my sister!' and she quietly folded up the confiscated gloves which Honor flung to her, placed them in her new bonnet-box, papered her fair curls, and betook herself to rest.

Did Conny really think, when Miss Wedderburn asked her the question in the glove-shop, that Honor's hand was 'about the same size as her own'?

Meantime, Mr. Tom Tracy, after executing one or two commissions of his own, and dining at his club, returned to Westbourne Terrace.

'I say, Isabel,' he asked in the course of the



evening, 'why would you not let that little Miss Blake drive home with me when she wanted to do so?'

'Because she was far too pretty, Tom,' said Isabel. 'I mean it. She really looked beautiful, aunt, in her new bonnet. People stared into the brougham the whole time as it was. It would not have been right to let her drive home in a hansom.'

'Not even with a grave old fellow like me for escort?' laughed Mr. Tracy. 'Well, I don't much mind. She *is* very pretty; but the elder sister is a brick, in spite of her clumsy figure. I never met such a jolly child to talk to—no end of ideas!'

'It is a great pity she is so *gauche*,' said Isabel; and Lady Tracy said—

'Hum!'

## CHAPTER VIII.

LONGFELLOW AND DICKENS.

**T**HERE is a parcel was left for you last night, Miss Blake,' said Sarah, as she opened the shutters in the girls' room. 'It came when I was busy, and I forgot to bring it up afterward.'

Honor put out her hand, but Constance was before her, and secured the parcel.

'Miss Blake, 10 Albert Place, Islington,' she read, and then proceeded deliberately to open the packthread.

'It is directed to me!' remonstrated Honor.

'It is sure to be for us both,' replied Conny calmly. 'Did I not tell you?' as she took off the wrapper and revealed the contents—two books tied together, with a note inside the string, inscribed 'Miss Blake,' and a smaller

paper parcel inscribed 'Miss Constance Blake, with cousinly regards.'

'Books,' said Conny, with a glance at them, as she passed them into Honor's hand; 'and what is this, I wonder?'

A pause of suspense was followed by an exclamation of delight, as the daintiest of Russia leather travelling work-bags lay revealed, all fitted with gold thimble and ivory tablets, tiny mirror and scent-bottles, and a hundred pretty things Conny had long coveted.

'Hooray!' cried Charlie, who had awoke unperceived, 'what a jolly go! Was that sent you by some beau you picked up yesterday, Conny?'

'How vulgar you are, Charlie! Dress yourself at once, sir, and go down-stairs!'

Some altercation ensued, but finally Charlie obeyed part of the order, with a view to being the first to report Conny's newly-gained treasure in his mother's room.

Meantime, as soon as Conny had sufficiently explored her own treasure, she unceremoniously read Honor's note over her shoulder. It was a few lines from Mr. Tracy, hoping that the

books would please her, and beguile some hours of her journey, and that her sister would accept the work-bag, and find it a useful travelling-companion.

Soon after, while his sisters were dressing, Charlie poked in his head.

‘Newton says you ought not to open such vanities on Sunday,’ he called out, banged the door, and ran down-stairs.

Honor placed the note and her books in a drawer, and having hurried over her toilet, was taking a furtive peep at them, when her mother entered to inquire into Charlie’s story and repeat Newton’s warning.

In spite of this, however, she examined and admired the workbag very freely; and then, turning towards her eldest daughter, read the note, and drew the precious books from their hiding-place.

“‘David Copperfield,’ ‘Longfellow’s Poems,’” she read; ‘I suppose they are nice books, or Mr. Tracy would not have sent them to you. You will be worse than ever now, Honor. You will have no head at all till you have read these, I suppose; but remember you must not read

them on Sunday. I think, though, as we sail so early to-morrow, you must answer this note to-day after church, and thank Mr. Tracy for yourself and Conny.'

'Yes,' said Conny, 'Honor ought; for the parcel and the note were addressed to her; and in her own mind Conny registered a vow that she would learn to write a lady-like hand, and, if possible, to spell, before another similar occasion should arrive.

Poor Honor could spell, but alack-a-day for the writing! The epistle occupied her during a long hour after the early dinner, and was not, when completed, at all satisfactory to herself.

One good thing befell her. Her mother, when about to dictate to her, was called by Newton, and so the words were Honor's own; and if not artistically put together, they were at least well chosen and simple. Conny also was out of the way at the time; in fact, she was engaged in renewing the curl of some of her ringlets, which had escaped from their proper shape, and having excited a great deal of evident admiration at the Islington church they had attended that morning, she was not disposed to

forego any adjuncts to another favourable appearance in the afternoon. Mr. Spiggins had volunteered to take Charlie a walk, by way of continuing his acquaintance with Constance ; and Emmy when left to herself was always very quiet, so Honor was allowed to finish her letter in peace.

It was as follows :—

‘ DEAR MR. TRACY,—Your parcel surprised us both very much. We thank you greatly for it.

‘ I think Conny would rather have the bag to carry with her in France than anything else, and I know I would rather have the books.

‘ As it is Sunday I am not able to tell you how I like them, but before I remembered that, I just looked into them, and I read the “ Psalm of Life,” and I think it is just like things your mother talked to me about, and it seems as if I had heard it somewhere before I was born. Mamma, Conny, and I send our best regards to Lady Tracy and Miss Wedderburn [this bit was dictated, as were the beginning and end, by Mrs. Blake]. Please thank Miss Wedderburn for sending me a pair of gloves.—I remain, dear Mr. Tracy, yours very sincerely,  
‘ HONOR BLAKE.’

Mrs. Blake did not altogether approve of this letter. It was not quite *en règle*, she thought,—rather odd, too familiar, and above all too untidy, although poor Honor had taken special pains, and there were no blots; but there was no help for it.

The bells were ringing for afternoon service, and Honor was wanted to read a sermon to Newton while the rest were at church, so the letter was sealed and posted without correction.

‘Look at that, mother,’ said Mr. Tracy, handing it to her across the breakfast-table. ‘That is a child after your own heart! A strange little body! I will keep it as a curiosity,’ and he put it in his desk.

Early on Monday morning Mrs. Blake with her children embarked on board the steamer that was to convey them to Bordeaux. Mr. Simons had recommended this route as the least fatiguing and cheapest.

This voyage was not so unpleasant as their last. The weather was fine most of the way, and after the first day none of them suffered much from sickness.

The many quiet hours Honor was able to

spend over her new treasures made the steamer a sort of paradise to her.

She read Longfellow through first, hoarding away 'David Copperfield' for the future, as a miser does his wealth.

When she came to 'The Builders,' she read it over several times and mused—'Nothing little is or low!' Was it not possible that she had been all her life neglecting the duties of to-day, as they lay close round her pathway?

She got up and crossed the deck to where Newton was lying.

'Shall I read to you, Newton?'

'Yes,' and he put into her hand one of Mr. Bull's tracts.

Honor would much rather have read Longfellow to him, but she went through the first half of the tract more cheerfully than her wont, and then she assisted Newton into his cabin, as he complained of cold, and helped to make him comfortable there, receiving in return some uncomplimentary remarks on her awkwardness, which, strange to say, she did not feel inclined to resent.

'Read me some more,' said Newton. Honor



would have preferred the deck so much to the cabin, but all the others liked the deck, so she sat down by Newton and took up the tract.

‘Not that ! I am tired of that !’ said the boy. ‘What kind of books are those new ones you have ?’

Honor read him some of Longfellow, and it delighted him very much.

The next morning he made her bring it again, and it was quite wonderful, even to herself, how much more enjoyable the book was when shared with another.

She would have been glad to have extended the readings to ‘David Copperfield,’ but Newton repudiated all ‘novels’ as evil, and gave her a long lecture on the subject.

It was just a week after that pleasant dinner in Westbourne Terrace when the travellers landed in France, and sought the hotel recommended by Mr. Simons, there to rest on the ensuing Sunday.

Anything but a sweet or comfortable halting-place was the ‘Hôtel des Fées.’

I have had some experience in my life of Indian ‘travellers’ bungalows’ and Egyptian

'rest-houses,' but I think few such domiciles excel in discomfort the real old-fashioned provincial French inn.

Newton's wrath at the hardships he was now forced to undergo was extreme ; real hardships to a frail half-crippled invalid. The steep dirty stone stairs he mounted with such pain, the chill draughty chamber, where the chimney smoked so as to render a fire impossible, the bed smothered in an alcove, the miserable mess brought to him, after long waiting, in place of the cup of tea he coveted, might have annoyed one less wedded to his own comforts than was poor Newton.

Then all the Blakes' luggage had been carried to the Custom-house, and before they could find out what had become of it, the Douane was closed, and would not, they were assured, be opened till Monday morning.

This was (or was supposed to be) Honor's fault. When poor Honor tried in practice her gleanings from *Télémaque* and *Charles XII.* translated into the mellifluous brogue of *Kil-daggan*, she found she could make her hearers understand but few words she uttered, and as

to her comprehending anything of the rapid jargon they addressed to her, they might as well have spoken Telugu.

Her mortification and disappointment were bitter, and you may be sure her relations did not spare her one reproach. To Newton the loss of his clothes and other comforts was really serious; the children grumbled exceedingly at having no night-dresses; and Conny was more than usually ruffled at having to attend the English church next morning in her old bonnet and gloves. The church was near their hotel, and Newton insisted they should all go. Honor was quite as great a sufferer as any one else, for her mother had made her place her precious books in a carpet-bag before they left the steamer.

Early on Monday the luggage was recovered, but whether some Douanier took a fancy to 'David Copperfield,' or whether it dropped out of the bag by accident, Honor never saw it again.

She cried over her loss as if the book had been a friend. Mrs. Blake scolded her for her folly, and Newton said he was very glad, as he

did not approve of her reading novels. Conny said it 'served her right.' Honor's first act, when the diligence conveyed them to their night's resting-place that evening, was to make a pocket inside her garments, and there she carried her other dear book for the rest of the journey.

The diligence took them by slow and wearying stages to Bayonne. The hotel there was a slight improvement on that at Bordeaux, but Mrs. Blake declared herself ruined by hotel bills, and the next morning after their arrival she sallied forth with Conny to seek out Monsieur Voisin, and ask his help in procuring another residence.

Monsieur Voisin was very good-natured, and as a temporary measure, till Mrs. Blake could visit Biarritz and see houses there, he recommended apartments in the Rue Porte St. Martin. Such a dirty street, and such dark ill-conditioned rooms! but they were better than several Mrs. Blake visited that day, so, weary and sick at heart, the poor lady was glad to close the bargain for them, and remove her luggage and her family there.

This seemed only the commencement of their troubles; only the commencement, poor Mrs. Blake declared plaintively, of a host of expenses she had never counted on.

French apartments are not, as all the world knows, furnished like English lodgings, and before the Blakes could enjoy a meal, or go to bed in their new domicile, they wanted linen, plate, and numerous other things—above all, a servant.

Monsieur Voisin had bid Mrs. Blake good morning, rather glad to escape from such a hopeless charge as this shiftless Irish family seemed to be, and her landlord, who had walked with her through the rooms, and given her the inventory, was about to leave, when all these wants crowded on Mrs. Blake's mind, and she appealed to him for help.

The honest bourgeois knew a few words of English, just enough to understand her wants, but they fairly puzzled him. He good-naturedly paused, and thought for a moment, and then saying 'Tenez—je vais appeler Mademoiselle Louise,' he descended the stairs to the door below Mrs. Blake's and knocked. It was

---

opened by a singularly handsome girl. Her black stuff dress was exquisitely fitted to her shapely figure, made high to her throat, and close to her wrists, and finished with snow-white linen collar and cuffs; fastened round her glossy dark hair behind, she wore a little blue silk handkerchief, deftly knotted, with one corner hanging down coquettishly over her pretty ear.

The room beyond her was the picture of neatness; kitchen utensils bright as silver decorated the walls round about the mantelpiece, beneath which blazed a ruddy wood fire, where hung a savoury pot *au feu*; the red tiles on the floor looked bright and cheerful, the window was gay with several flowering plants, and near it sat, shelling early peas, a stout elderly woman, dressed in black like the girl, but with a bright bandana handkerchief tied over her head, so as almost entirely to conceal her hair.

In front of the window was an ironing-board, surmounted with a snowy pile of rough dried embroidery and laces, and the girl held in her hand a richly worked chemisette, the costly edging of which her taper fingers drew daintily into shape.

‘Bon jour, Monsieur le Bœuf,’ she said, with a graceful curtsy, then, raising her voice, as one does in speaking to the deaf, ‘Ma tante ! voilà Monsieur le Bœuf.’ The old woman looked up, and greeted the visitor, who proceeded to unfold his errand. It was a family of English—‘Irlandais plutôt,’ Monsieur Voisin had told him,—‘who had taken the apartments on the first floor : a lady and her two daughters, with several younger children, one a poor invalid. They were all wonderfully helpless, entirely ignorant of French, and, as it seemed to Monsieur le Bœuf, of most other useful things. ‘Would Mademoiselle Louise, who was so kind to every one, help them a little?’ Mademoiselle Louise assented ; ‘but how ? I do not speak English, not a word,’ and she shook her pretty head, and then explained to her aunt what Monsieur le Bœuf had been saying.

‘Irish ?’ commented the old lady ; ‘then doubtless they are good Catholics ?’

Monsieur le Bœuf thought not, for they had come from Ireland with introductions to Monsieur Voisin, the Protestant pastor, ‘but Mon-

sieur Voisin was, his faith notwithstanding, a worthy man, and would not have brought to Monsieur le Bœuf's apartments people who were otherwise than respectable.'

The old woman grunted dubiously, but Mademoiselle Louise, smiling sweetly, said she would do what she could, she would go upstairs instantly, but Monsieur le Bœuf must, just at first, accompany her as interpreter.

Monsieur le Bœuf bowed, and followed her into the room where Mrs. Blake sat, the picture of helpless despair. With very few words Mademoiselle Louise found out what they wanted.

'A servant? She knew a girl who might suit Madame—not an accomplished servant, but a good girl, and cleanly—only she lived at "Anglet," too far to seek her to-day. Meantime Madame and the young ladies, and the poor sick gentleman, and the little ones, must dine—of course. Monsieur le Bœuf should order dinner from a restaurant as he went home—a restaurant who would furnish everything till Madame could buy what was necessary. And did none of the English family know even



a few words of French? Mademoiselle did? Mademoiselle said "feu," "*pas fou* Mademoiselle," "*feu*," that is it, and "draps," "draps de lit." Mademoiselle and she would soon understand each other. Monsieur le Bœuf might go, he was no longer needed, and she, with Mademoiselle's assistance, would get all that was required. Her aunt would lend the lady linen till her own arrived.'

Mrs. Blake's heavier boxes had been committed to the charge of a carrier at Bordeaux. The lithe graceful figure signed to Honor to follow her down-stairs, and when she addressed to her some remark, Honor took courage to say—'Si—vous—parlez—lentement—je--comprendrai.' Mademoiselle Louise made her repeat her sentence, then nodded her head, and corrected Honor's pronunciation in one or two words, and, leading her to an old-fashioned armoire in the kitchen, after parley with her aunt she proceeded to unlock it, and disburse its stores, teaching Honor the French name of each thing as she did so—'clef,' 'nappe,' 'serviette,' 'drap de lit,' 'tas d'oreiller,' 'torchon.' Honor's quick

ear caught the words, and rapid signs explained anything she failed to understand.

With her arms full of napery she followed Mademoiselle Louise up-stairs, where Conny, eager for a share in all that was doing, helped to make the beds. Mademoiselle Louise again descended with Honor, and carried from her own stores wood and pine-cones, which she soon blew into a cheerful blaze. The month was June, but the evening, though in those southern latitudes, was chilly to Newton.

The dinner ordered by M. le Bœuf now appeared, and was partaken of in greater comfort than any of the party could have hoped for in the morning. Then Newton said he wanted tea, and Honor went down-stairs to ask Mademoiselle Louise, again busy with her ironing.

‘Tea? certainly. I will conduct Mademoiselle to the druggist’s.’

It seemed strange to Honor to buy tea at a druggist’s, but so long as she lived near Bayonne she never got it elsewhere. She felt some pride when she instructed Mademoiselle Louise how to make the water really boiling and prepare genuine English tea. M. le Bœuf’s cold square

white china tea-pot did not make it very well ; but Newton was grateful for it after the last few days of privation from his favourite beverage, and he did not that evening, as he had done on each since he landed in France, say he wished he had never left Ireland.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BAYONNE.

**I** WISH I could do things like you do, Mademoiselle Louise,' said Honor one day as she stood watching the French maiden making an omelette. Six weeks had passed, smoothly enough, in the Rue Porte St. Martin. The sunny climate and change of scene had worked wonders for Newton. At first he missed his invalid-chair greatly, and none was to be hired at Bayonne; but now, lured by the sunshine, he would walk not only to Monsieur Voisin's church on Sundays, but as far as the 'place' without the Porte St. Martin, where nearly every afternoon he loved to sit under the trees. Once or twice he had enjoyed a drive through the neighbouring country. Mrs. Blake found this luxury within her means now

and then. Living in the Rue Porte St. Martin was decidedly cheaper than in Cavendish Terrace, especially as Mademoiselle Louise and 'Tante Beaulieu' were both very good-natured in bestowing help and advice on the strangers.

Madame Beaulieu did not very easily get over her distrust on the score of their religion, but she could not help seeing they were honest and inoffensive, and her sense of justice told her that, as heretics must live, it was not right they should pay much more than their neighbours for what they wanted, even if they were foreigners, especially as she shrewdly guessed the Irish widow was poor.

So far indeed the change had in many things been a blessed one for all the family. Their lodging at the top of that bare stone stair-case, in that cramped unsavoury street, was unpleasant to them all, as life-long dwellers in such cities cannot understand; and as the summer advanced this annoyance grew worse; but Mrs. Blake found the prices demanded by the Biarritz house-owners for 'the season' quite beyond her means (Biarritz, where I have known a Russian duke lodged in one room, *au troisième*, for the

temporary possession of which he paid a fabulous price).

Mrs. Blake was also lazily unwilling to quit the useful neighbourhood of Mademoiselle Louise and her aunt, so, though she joined the family chorus of discontent against their present dwelling, she would not hear of a change just now.

The bare larder of Cavendish Terrace was exchanged for the plenty Madame Beaulieu, who undertook Mrs. Blake's marketing, dispensed daily from her basket,—such luscious fruits and superb vegetables, all at such marvelously small prices. Newton and his mother grumbled a little, it is true, at the deficiency in culinary talent displayed by their new maid Pauline, but the others cared very little about that.

Warm sunshine and plenty, in place of chill fogs and meagre fare—such things tell rapidly on young lives.

Conny liked France. She liked the luxuries above named as much as any one, and she liked her afternoon walks on the 'Place,' where she always volunteered to accompany Newton. She had coaxed her mother out of summer

frocks for herself and Honor—‘Fond blanc au jolis boutons bleus,’ as Mademoiselle Louise, who helped to choose them, called them; and these had been made up by Mademoiselle Louise and a friend of hers very tastefully.

Conny had fixed her affections, too, not altogether hopelessly, she thought, on a mauve and white brillante, to wear ‘turn about’ with the blue. Her London bonnet was admired even in France, and she took good care Mademoiselle Louise should make her dress long.

‘I am nearly fifteen,’ said the girl; ‘I am no longer a child.’ Indeed she was not.

Whether on the ‘Place,’ or when sharing Newton’s country drives, or walking with Honor through the streets, she felt that all beholders noticed with admiration ‘la jolie Anglaise aux cheveux dorées.’ Do not let us rudely pry into the reasons why Mademoiselle Louise did not like Constance so well as Honor. Was not her chief complaint against the Irish family that they were so helpless? and was not Conny, on her arrival in Bayonne, by far the most helpful and active of all?

Perhaps it was because Conny learned

French very slowly and with difficulty ; Newton, eager to follow Monsieur Voisin's services, excelled her very soon ; and Honor, who had really acquired a vast vocabulary in Ireland, and needed but practice and accurate pronunciation to utilize it, could hold a conversation in six weeks.

Mrs. Blake, at Newton's request, engaged a French teacher for him. This gentleman was recommended by M. Voisin, and was a young pastor temporarily without a flock. Conny wearied of his lessons the day after she heard Madame Voisin tell her mother he had left his newly married wife, to whom he was devoted, with her parents at Rochelle.

Honor learned all he taught as rapidly as he could teach ; and Newton not only gained a new language, but a new interest in life, through the lessons.

Honor often watched Louise Beaulieu's fingers while they starched and ironed, and sewed and embroidered, or prepared tasty dishes for her own and her aunt's simple meals, and did a hundred other household tasks, with such pretty cleverness. The shapely small brown



hands seemed never soiled, the graceful dress never ruffled, no matter what the occupation might be.

Then she began to think, if she were like Mademoiselle Louise—not so pretty, but as useful,—Newton would eat those nice dishes if he knew how they were made, but when they came from the restaurant he refused them; and Pauline had no talent for cookery.

And so she said, ‘I wish I could do things like you, Mademoiselle Louise.’

‘No, Miss Blake,’ Mademoiselle Louise remonstrated; ‘it is right that I should do such things. I am a poor orphan, dependent on my good aunt; but you are an English young lady, of good family, without doubt, and rich.’

‘Yes, I am well born,’ replied Honor, rousing by her words a little republican lion in the heart of her friend—a very little lion he was, but he curled his tail defiantly for a moment, and only went to rest again under the habitual benevolence that reigned there, when the Irish girl went on—‘But I am not rich. We are terribly poor, Mademoiselle Louise—very *very* poor sometimes, when mamma’s quarter-day,

when she gets her money, is nearly come ; and if you would teach me how to help them all, I should be so thankful !'

The French girl was touched. She could see how little they all loved 'la demoiselle gauche,' and yet she, more than any other, was willing to work for the rest. Also, these Irish people were poor—her aunt had guessed as much,—and yet how honestly they paid for all they bought and used ; how they dreaded even a small debt ! She had known many foreigners less careful about owing what they could not pay ! (Be it here observed that the non-payment of debts was a Kildaggan tradition the Blakes had left behind in their ancestral halls.) And there was something, Louise could not tell what, that took her fancy in this rough Irish girl, and so this strange friendship grew and prospered ; and Honor began that day to take lessons, no longer despised, in household tasks, from Mademoiselle Louise.

Her hands were very awkward over such things at first, and at first her relations sneered at all she did. It was long before Newton would really believe Honor had dressed a

dish he could eat, or before Conny was reconciled to seeing her sister, with brushes strapped to her feet, polishing the floor of their sitting-room. At last Conny began to think the latter exercise improved Honor's figure, and she engaged in it herself; and then Honor bethought her of Charlie's and Emmy's neglected education, and asked her mother's leave to take it in hand.

Mrs. Blake granted this wonderingly. Charlie was an intractable pupil, but Emmy repaid Honor's care not only by attention, but by love. Even Charlie too learned something, and Honor's life, ere her seventeenth birthday, had really begun to be useful, and in proportion as it was so, to be happy.

Her intellectual nature yearned in unsatisfied hunger sometimes, it is true.

She had no books.

When she asked Mademoiselle Louise to lend her some, that damsel shook her head.

'There are many bad books,' she said; 'my confessor has warned me against them. I can lend you books of devotion, but those you might not wish to study. As for books of

amusement, I never read those—my aunt and my confessor would both forbid it.’

Nor was an application to Monsieur Voisin much more successful. His library consisted mostly of works on theology, beside whose rigid Calvinism Mr. Bull’s tenets seemed mild ; and though Madame Voisin good-naturedly searched for some of her school prizes, and brought forward the exquisite ‘*Picciola*,’ and some simple French tales, these were soon read through. One English book Monsieur Voisin possessed, and lent to Honor ; it was to her in itself a library—an abridgment of Napier’s *Peninsular Battles*. How the waving corn-slopes and dusty lanes of Anglet became peopled then ! How she and Charlie made an earnest pilgrimage through the noisy dirty quarter of St. Esprit, all undaunted by Made-moiselle Louise’s flat refusal to accompany them, or by the appearance and language of the denizens of that low quarter, up the fatal hill of St. Etienne and to the sad ‘English burying-ground’ ! She only went there once, for it was evening when she returned, and she was very much frightened by some intoxicated

French sailors she met in St. Esprit, and by Charlie's pugnacious desire to fight them when they addressed his sister.

The walk to Anglet was however quite unobjectionable, and she often led Charlie and Emmy on there, while Mrs. Blake, Newton, and Conny remained in the 'Place.'

The mossy banks behind Marrac, covered with glorious wild-flowers, attracted the children, as well as Honor herself, by their beauty; while to her fancy that lovely valley was all alive with martial music and waving banners and hero forms—

'Ere evening to be numbered with the grass,  
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow  
In its next verdure.'

Her cheeks did not flush, and her tears did not flow, as they did at Anglet, when, with Mademoiselle Louise, after permission extracted, not without difficulty, from Mrs. Blake, she visited the cathedral on a fête-day—the cathedral of Edward the Black Prince!

Honor came back, silent and awed, from *that* pilgrimage, and somehow she began to wish her heart could have joined, not in the tinsel

and wax-candle procession she had witnessed, but in the worship practised by those whose memory she revered there.

And now Honor, shut off from reading, began to write. The musings she was wont to pencil down while Charlie and Emmy gathered their wild-flowers, or at night, when every one else in the house was asleep, had no great value in themselves, but they taught her to write rapidly.

Nor was her promise to Lady Tracy forgotten. She wrote on her first arrival in Bayonne to that lady, and had some trouble in procuring from her mother money to prepay the letter.

Mrs. Blake, though not naturally stingy, was incredibly stupid about the necessity of allowing her children pocket-money.

Lady Tracy sent Honor in reply such a delightful letter, and the girl wrote a very long one in answer; but the postage this time proved an insurmountable obstacle.

She carried it about in her pocket till the date was very old, and though she felt it was much better worth reading than her last, she

was about to destroy it, when Lady Tracy wrote again, and told her in a postscript not to prepay her letters. Then Honor sent the old epistle with a new one, and after that the correspondence was carried on pretty constantly.

At Christmas-time Lady Tracy sent each of the girls a ten-pound note, with a special proviso that they were to spend it on *themselves*. This seemed less unreasonable to Mrs. Blake, as the family finances had just about this time been replenished by a present from Phil,—poor Phil's first earnings, which he generously sent to his mother.

Phil was doing well now, he wrote. He was beginning to earn money, and hoped to save enough before many years to purchase a little land for himself, and when Charlie was old enough he must come out to help him. Of M'Carthy he had seen little. They had met once lately, and M'Carthy had given him a letter for Honor, which he enclosed. The M'Carthys had now gone into another province.

M'Carthy's letter was not very long, but it was very warm-hearted, and not unsatisfactory.

He and Ellen were earning their bread

comfortably, he said. He was about to take up a new situation, which would be extremely well paid, and his mother and sister, with Judy and one of Ellen's brothers, were to sail from Ireland that month to join them.

Honor answered the letter in one to Phil, but she did not receive another for several years.

Conny's principal cross at Bayonne during this summer and autumn was want of society.

Madame Voisin called on Mrs. Blake, and one or two of Monsieur Voisin's flock had a sort of bowing acquaintance with her, and two elderly French ladies in the apartments opposite those of the Blakes had called; but these people Mrs. Blake felt were all 'bourgeoisie,' and though she could not be ungrateful for their civilities, she considered herself nearly as far above them as she was above Made-moiselle Louise and her aunt.

Poor simple Mrs. Blake! She never guessed that not only this comfortable 'bourgeoisie,' but the little 'repasseuse' and 'brodeuse' below stairs and her portly aunt, with their semi-Basque blood, considered themselves quite as good, to say the very least, as any penniless foreigner!



It was hard on poor Conny, as the Biarritz season waxed and waned, to find the 'Place' forsaken, except by nurses and children, and when she persuaded her mother to take her to Biarritz one day, to see neither in the vehicles that flowed without stopping along the dusty road, nor in the gorgeously appalled crowds on the beach, one person who knew her to speak to.

Of English acquaintances they had but one — the consul, through whom Mrs. Blake's quarterly income was remitted to her. This gentleman's wife kindly called on the Irish family, and invited 'Mrs. and Miss Blake' to tea. Conny chose to be Miss Blake on that occasion, and it was then she obtained the coveted mauve and white brillante, on the promise that she would make it up herself.

Mademoiselle Louise cut out the dress, and Honor, without the least envy that she had not one like it, helped Conny to make it.

Honor's fingers were not quite so clever as Conny's yet, but there was a wide and daily increasing difference between the sisters' work. All Conny did now was done for her own

advantage or pleasure,—most of Honor's work was for others.

‘Hurrah! hurrah!’ cried Charlie one autumn morning; ‘we are to go to the pine-woods to-day!’

Mademoiselle Louise had long promised to show the foreigners the road to the ‘pinaies,’ but the starching and ironing during the Biarritz season had given her no leisure. Now, however, the season was past. A comfortably-filled bag of five-franc pieces in a corner of the armoire testified that it had not been spent unprofitably by the ‘repasseuse.’ It was her fête-day too, and her aunt insisted she must have some amusement, so she said she would spend it in the pine-woods with Honor and her young brother and sisters.

The party were to dine there under the trees, and each carried some portion of their provisions.

Conny concealed her basket as carefully as she could while passing through the more frequented streets of the town, but the hour was too early for any one whose observation she cared about to be abroad. They crossed the

bridge, and, after a brisk walk, reached the sandy approaches to the pine-woods.

‘Is that a cork-tree?’ asked Honor, pointing to one gnarled and deformed with pachydermal hide, that stood by their pathway.

‘There goes a squirrel!’ shouted Charlie, and flinging his share of the edibles to any one who liked to bring it on, he rushed after the little animal into the wood, but soon returned, wearied out by his chase through the sand, in which he sank ankle-deep.

‘You must not go too far alone, Monsieur Charlie. People have lost themselves before now in the pine-woods.’

‘Hark to the sea!’ cried Honor; ‘or is it the noise of the pine-trees?’

‘Both,’ Mademoiselle Louise thought. ‘The pine-trees made a noise like the ocean, even miles inland; but the sea was not far. They would go to the beach presently, when they had marked a spot where they would deposit their baskets, and some one must stay beside them.’

‘I will,’ said Conny, ‘and keep Emmy with me. I am tired.’

So the others scrambled through the drifted

sand-dunes, crowned by those sighing, sweet-scented pines, whose dark shafts shut out the sky, to where restless, melancholy Biscay sobbed and chafed upon the shore—‘so pitiless, ah, so pitiless a sea when angered!’ said Louise. ‘Few ships approached that shore in a storm and lived to tell the tale! A nephew of her aunt’s (not a cousin of her own) had told her all about it.’

‘I think it is a very sad place,’ said Conny, when the party, guided by the fluttering handkerchief Louise had tied to a tree, reached the rendezvous.

‘I like it,’ said Honor.

‘So do I,’ agreed Charlie. ‘A jolly place for hide-and-seek.’

Then they dined, and then they all collected pine-cones, with which they filled their baskets and handkerchiefs.

‘Good stores,’ said Mademoiselle Louise; ‘good for lighting fires. My aunt and Pauline will be pleased.’

Shortly after she said it was time to go home. The quarter near the bridge was not so well-behaved as it might be—‘not so bad as

St. Esprit, but still not fit for young girls to walk through alone after dark.'

So they packed up their belongings and mustered their party.

'Charlie! Charlie!' Where was Charlie?

'He was here ten minutes ago.'

'He is gone after another squirrel.'

'I told the young gentleman not to wander in the wood.'

So the frightened girls discoursed, and for more than half an hour they ran through the wood calling Charlie all in vain.

'There he is!' cried Honor at last. 'I see some one moving behind that tree.'

A rapid bound brought her beyond the tree, into the centre of another picnic dinner, and nearly into the arms of a white-haired, pleasant-looking gentleman, who was just lifting a bottle of champagne from a basket by the tree.

'What is the matter?' he cried, in unmis-takeable English.

Honor stammered excuses, and then Conny came up. She was much more easily frightened than Honor, but she forgot all that in a moment, and her explanation was self-pos-

sessed, and worthy of a woman ten years her senior.

The gentleman introduced himself as Mr. Simmonds, and the three rather gaudily dressed girls sitting near as his daughters; the beardless youth beside them was his son, and that other gentleman a friend, M. le Conte de Trouville, who had come to show them the pine-woods.

The young ladies—Blake? The Miss Blakes need be in no fear about their brother. An English boy with red hair? He passed the Simmonds party not long ago, going towards the sea-beach, which was near. Would the Miss Blakes sit down and share in some refreshment, and let their servant look for the youth?

‘She is not our servant,’ blurted out Honor, in spite of Conny’s frowns. ‘Conny, Mademoiselle Louise and I will go to the beach for Charlie, and you and Emmy can walk slowly back to our tree.—Thank you, sir.’

Mr. Simmonds disclaimed thanks, but begged Conny would rest there. Her sister could offer no objection, so she and Louise proceeded in silence toward the beach.

‘Do you know who that gentleman is?’ asked Honor.

‘Monsieur le Conte de Trouvaille? Oh, I know him well!’ laughed Louise. ‘Every one knows M. de Trouvaille, he is so eccentric! But he is of excellent family, well connected, and has a pretty estate near Cambo.’

‘No; the English gentleman, I mean.’

‘Ah, those English? They are a family who spent part of the summer at Biarritz, and are now living in the apartments of Madame Soucier in the Arceaux. No, I know very little about them.’

Just then they overtook Charlie, with his handkerchief full of crabs, all unconscious of the trouble he had caused, and they returned to the Simmondses’ encampment.

Conny was quite at home there, eating cakes and sipping champagne. Honor was begged to join her. Blushing at the insular ill-breeding that ignored Mademoiselle Louise, she declined, and said they must return home at once.

‘Oh, don’t hurry,’ said Conny, ‘Mr. Simmonds will see us home;’ and in spite of all Honor could do, they waited for the Simmonds party.

Mademoiselle Louise behaved with great dignity and self-possession. She could not go home alone in the gathering darkness, so after helping Honor to collect their baskets (Conny would not carry one toward home this evening), she took Emmy by the hand and followed the others. Honor lingered behind by her. Charlie was busily engaged in a discussion with Mr. Simmonds about Biarritz boats, and by them walked the eldest Miss Simmonds, a girl nearer thirty-five than twenty-five. Her two sisters walked one on each side of Conny, the boy of eighteen, whose fancy was evidently entangled in those golden ringlets, hovering round them. Honor's intention of devoting herself to her slighted friend was frustrated by Monsieur le Conte de Trouvaille, who walked alongside of her, and talked to her all the way. He was a grizzled little man of fifty or thereabouts, with sharp ferrety eyes and a curious quick manner. He spoke English, with a strong French accent, very fluently, and told Honor he liked her country women, though not the men! He extracted her family history by a rigorous cross-examination, and then said he would call on



Mrs. Blake. His wife, he regretted to say, was a confirmed invalid, and unable to visit.

When the party reached the Arceaux, Mr. Simmonds asked if he should escort the English ladies any farther. Honor said 'No,' but his younger daughters and son negatived this, so he and his elder daughter went into their house, and the others, including Monsieur de Trouvaille, walked as far as the Rue Porte St. Martin.

Then they said farewell, the English girls loudly promising to call on Conny to-morrow, and M. de Trouvaille bowing profoundly to all, including Mademoiselle Louise—the only person who had showed the 'repasseuse' such courtesy.

## CHAPTER X.

### HONOR'S FIRST BALL.

**T**HE next day brought Conny's promised visitors, and with them Mr. and Miss Simmonds to call on Mrs. Blake. Mr. Simmonds was a man who had evidently seen much of the world, and was a pleasant acquaintance. What his profession or his means were did not appear, but that the latter must be ample his expenditure seemed to imply. His eldest daughter was a quiet and somewhat sad woman. Her sisters told Conny 'Elizabeth had had several disappointments in love'—in *matrimonial projects* these young ladies meant—and this might in some degree account for her occasional preoccupation and depression. The two younger girls were in their own opinion very attractive; one of them was really

pretty, and though neither equalled Conny in good looks, and they were both considerably her seniors, they excelled her in smart dressing, in freedom of manner, and a certain air which they called 'stylish.'

Conny and these young ladies quickly grew fast friends. The Irish girl greedily learned from them all in which she deemed herself deficient, and whether walking together, or at the house of one or other family, they soon became inseparable. Conny's share of all household tasks, and of attendance on Newton, was now left to Honor, who was quite willing to be thus excluded from the society of their new friends. At first Honor joined the other girls in their walks and amusements, but the tone of their conversation greatly disgusted her, and she remonstrated with Conny on the subject. There was perhaps no great harm in this talk; but it was vulgar, and, Honor felt, unmaidenly; it was all and always about 'lovers,' or 'admirers' who might possibly become such.

Each of the Miss Simmondses had her own experiences on this head to pour into Conny's willing ear, and Conny felt rather mortified that

she had no similar confidences to bestow ; but her friends whispered to her, as a great secret, that their brother was 'in love' with her, and, *faute de mieux*, Conny accepted the attentions of the English hobbledehoy with coquetry worthy of an older flirt.

There were also two French gentlemen who used to pace up and down by the neighbouring rope-walk when the English girls were on the 'Place,' and glances were exchanged, and purposely dropped gloves more than once restored, and much giggling and folly went on about these moustached heroes.

Honor remonstrated, and Conny said she supposed she was jealous, while the other young ladies openly ridiculed her plain face and figure. Then she absented herself from their company, and remained more constantly at home.

Monsieur de Trouville had also called on Mrs. Blake, and unwittingly he saved Honor from a great annoyance the Simmonds's intimacy threatened to inflict on her. The season for winter garments had come, and Mrs. Blake, though little wont to spend money on her daughters' apparel, was obliged to confess they

had outgrown all their Dublin wardrobe, and wanted what Charlie termed 'a new rig.'

Conny's choice in such matters was always considered first, and it was a sort of family tradition that, excepting where the younger sister was indulged with some extra piece of finery, she and Honor must dress alike. Personal tidiness and a growing taste for well-chosen and harmonious apparel were two of the acquisitions Honor had gained from her friend Louise. It was therefore not a little vexatious to her when Conny, at the Miss Simmondses' suggestion, selected a gaudy plaid for her own and her sister's winter's dress, and for their head-gear pork-pie hats with green feathers. Honor so strongly opposed this that the rival patterns were carried to Mrs. Blake, who was kept at home by Newton not being well, for decision. So long as the price was the same, she did not care about the colour, she said. At that moment Monsieur de Trouville was announced. He saw the stuffs on the table, and, Frenchman-like, joined with much interest in balancing their merits. Honor thought he must have heard something of their discussion as he

ascended the stairs, or else from Mademoiselle Louise. She was greatly amused to see how contemptuously he touched the plaid :—

‘English! How very English! What a pity it is, Mrs. Blake, your charming countrywomen will disfigure themselves by their toilets! I speak in vain of this to my pretty friends the Miss Simmondses. They think it is an old man’s whim! They should hear what the young men say of costumes that proclaim the wearer’s coming from half-a-mile off. *That*’—and he touched the plaid—‘is such a thing as they wear, when that rich brown, with a pretty *revers* of dark blue, and a bonnet to match the *revers*, how well it would suit their fair complexions! But most of your English charmers are infatuated on that subject! And as for their hats—pork-pie hats, for instance—can any one imagine a more frightful head-dress? And I heard of one the other day—heard of it, did not see it I rejoice to say’—and he simulated a little shudder—‘with a *green* feather!’

Conny bundled the green feathers into the milliner’s box again with dexterous sleight of hand and a hearty hope that he had not seen

them. She made Monsieur de Trouvaille give her in detail his idea of the brown and blue costume, and as soon as he left begged Honor to come with her to make the purchases.

‘Never mind dinner,’ she said, ‘I want to get the things before the Simmondses come out. I don’t want to tell them what we have decided on.’

Honor wondered, but held her tongue. Next Sunday the Miss Simmondses came out in all the glories of plaid and green feathers, and reproached Conny for duplicity when she appeared in her tasteful brown and blue.

‘On second thoughts I felt the plaid would not suit *me* so well as it does you, dears,’ smiled artful Conny; and Honor felt that her sister’s ideas of honesty, even in such a poor matter, were very low.

This little incident did not however seem much to divide the friends. After a time, indeed, their intimacy grew closer than ever; there was more whispering in corners, and Conny used frequently to walk towards the town with her companions, and remain absent for several hours.

Newton’s health again kept his mother by

his couch, and she was at all times too indolent to make much inquiry into how her daughters spent their time.

One day, toward the end of January, Mr. Simmonds called on Mrs. Blake, accompanied by his younger daughters, all looking very important, and in his jovial manner drew from his pocket two large cards which he presented to the lady, saying—

‘My Christmas present to your daughters.’

Honor saw by Conny's face she knew what it was. She took up one of the cards; it was a ticket for a public ball, which was to take place that day fortnight. Mrs. Blake was looking at the other card.

‘A ball! impossible!’ she cried. ‘Newton would never consent!’

‘With all due deference to Master Newton's theology, my dear madam,’ replied Mr. Simmonds blandly, ‘he must not be allowed to stand in the way of my young friends here. None can know better than yourself, who must have been the belle of many ball-rooms, how necessary such things are in the lives of pretty girls.’



‘Please do let us go, mamma dear,’ coaxed Conny, kissing her.

‘But the expense,’ said her mother.

‘We have Lady Tracy’s present, mamma.’ The ten-pound notes had arrived after their winter outfits were bought.

‘Very well,’ said her mother; ‘if you like to buy your own dresses, and if I can persuade Newton.’

‘Why should you tell your son?’ said Mr. Simmonds; ‘it will only vex him, and he need not, confined to his room as he is, know anything about it.’

‘Very true,’ sighed Mrs. Blake; ‘but there are two cards: is one for Honor?’

‘Certainly,’ said the good-natured Mr. Simmonds, ‘there must be no favouritism. Miss Honor must come too. Elizabeth and I will chaperon both with our own girls.’

When his daughters had persuaded him to bring Conny a ticket for the ball, it was only done by him on the condition that Honor, whom he liked better than her sister, should have one too.

‘Do you wish to go, Honor?’ asked her mother doubtfully.

Honor blushinglly assented. She was not yet eighteen, and at that age a first ball has untold charms for even the plain ones of womankind. It was true she had mentally devoted Lady Tracy's present to supplying herself with some books, but the evening dress could not cost *all* the ten pounds, and she had so often longed to see a ball.

So Mrs. Blake's consent was given, and Mademoiselle Louise was called into council on the subject of toilet. Conny repudiated her English friends as guides in this matter, politely, but firmly.

Mademoiselle Louise was charmed. What Frenchwoman is not, at even talking about a ball-dress?

'White, pure white, your dresses must be,' she said. 'Tarletane like flakes of snow, with numerous white muslin petticoats beneath, and jasmine in the hair. Blue flowers would suit the fair hair of Miss Constance best, but white is imperative at a first ball. And,' added the girl to herself, 'white will look best in dear Miss Blake's red hair.'

When the dresses were bought Honor was

delighted at their cheapness. They were to be made up by the girls themselves, with help from Louise and a friend of hers, in Madame Beaulieu's apartment, so this would not cost much either; but when there came to be added white shoes, flowers, laced handkerchiefs, all the hundred and one etceteras of a ball-room toilet, the bag containing the change for Lady Tracy's ten-pound note began to look woefully small.

The day of the ball grew nearer; at last it came. The small omnibus bespoken by Mr. Simmonds was to call for the Blake girls at nine precisely. At seven the hairdresser arrived, and Conny first submitted to his art. Honor could scarcely believe it was her sister she saw, so stately did those braids and plaits, making the luxuriant hair seem tenfold more luxuriant, render the erst ringleted Conny. Then Honor yielded her red head into his hands. The man stared into her face in a way the Irish maiden almost resented. Poor man! he was but exercising his art to the best of his power when he did so. He cared not in the least whether Honor's features were

beautiful or ugly, only he had studied his trade as an art, and he wanted to see what style of hairdressing he should combine with them.

'C'est ça,' he muttered, and the sunny locks were not drawn back in plait and braid, as from Conny's classic profile, but drooped in soft masses from the thoughtful head over her neck, where they were just caught up with the jasmine sprays.

'Pas jolie, il faut dire la vérité ; pas jolie, mais intéressante ! Spirituelle !' said Mademoiselle Louise, as she watched her favourite drive away.

All my female readers know how different a thing it is to stand before one's own mirror, with an admiring domestic audience, and to walk into a room blazing with light, where a hundred rival toilets show out side by side with that which, ten minutes ago, we thought peerless. Honor shrank at the ordeal, and was glad to take her place by the eldest Miss Simmonds in a corner, and then an omission rushed suddenly to her mind—

'Oh, Conny, we have never learned to dance.'

'Can't you dance ?' laughed Conny.

Before Honor could reply, a gentleman stepped before them, bowed, and asked for Conny's hand in the next waltz. Honor remembered him as one of the moustached promenaders of the rope-walk. Conny was gone before she could speak, and to her surprise, was soon whirling as lightly and deftly as any one among the waltzers.

Conny soon returned, but only to waltz away again, and not till half an hour after did some one ask Honor to dance. She declined with confusion, and Miss Simmonds came to her rescue, and explained to her that in France 'introductions' were not needed.

'That is not it,' said Honor; 'I can't dance—I never learned.' Miss Simmonds good-naturedly urged her to try, but Honor had not courage; 'then let us walk through the rooms,' said her chaperon. This walk was not a comfortable one. Miss Simmonds was in a fidget about her father, who was seated at a card-table with several companions, and would not heed his daughter's signals to join her. Honor proposed sitting down in some much better places than their own, but Miss Simmonds told

her these chairs belonged to other ladies, who, after the dance was over, would claim them. 'Every lady at these balls,' she said, 'takes her own chair on entering the room, and keeps it through the evening. I warned the girls to be in time to-night, but they were late as usual, so we got bad places.' 'The girls' had kept Honor and Conny sitting for half-an-hour in the omnibus, at Mr. Simmonds's door.

They returned to their places, and the evening wore away stupidly for Honor. Miss Simmonds seemed very restless and unhappy, and exchanged frequent whispers with her sisters, who also, Honor thought, though they danced away, seemed less light-hearted than usual.

Monsieur de Trouvaille came up to Honor during the evening to chat to her. He was all agape about some change in European politics, and talked about 'Lord John Russell' and 'Palmerston,' and 'the perfidy of England,' and Honor listened with evident weariness.

'Do you not agree with me, Miss Blake?' he cried. 'You are an Irishwoman, and surely all your country-people have cause to feel that

England is, has been always, perfidious as she is despotic.'

'I don't know anything about it,' said Honor.

'That astonishes me; I thought you were a woman of intellect, not one of those pretty misses, like your sister, whose hearts are in their dancing-shoes and their head-dresses.'

One of the pretty misses came up to claim her chair then, so Monsieur de Trouville moved farther off, not however before he had planted a thorn in poor Honor's heart.

She was so ugly then, even in this so carefully devised costume, not Monsieur de Trouville's French politeness could conceal the fact. What a fool she was to come to this ball!

•

•

## CHAPTER XI.

### SISTER JUSTINE.

**Y**OU may have my dress and shoes and all these things, Conny,' said Honor next morning, as she collected last night's costume, and threw it by her sister's bed. 'I shall go to no more balls!'

'Did you not like it?' demanded Conny. 'I thought it was delightful, and was only sorry Miss Simmonds would come away so early.'

Conny had danced incessantly through the evening,—twice out of every three times at least, the promenader of the rope-walk being her partner.

'Thank you, Honor, for the dress and flowers and handkerchief. The shoes and gloves are so large they will be of no use to me; but I daresay Julia Simmonds will be glad



to have them, if you really mean not to use them again.'

'You may do whatever you like with them. I give them to you!' and Honor hurried her toilet that she might be in time for morning prayers in Newton's room.

She was remorseful now for the time and thoughts spent away from her mother and the children of late, and had insisted on Pauline calling her early, so that she should be dressed before the usual breakfast-hour. Mrs. Blake was surprised and pleased at her punctuality.

'No wonder, when she never danced the whole evening!' grumbled Conny, when her mother contrasted her late appearance with her sister's conduct.

'Monsieur Voisin told me,' said Mrs. Blake, changing the conversation, 'there is most excellent tea to be got at a new chemist's at the other side of the bridge—here is the address. Will you walk there, Honor, and buy some? I have none for this evening, and Newton did not like the last we got at the shop near this.'

Honor assented, and Conny, who complained of cold, and could eat no breakfast, said she

would go with her; the walk would do her good.

They soon found the new shop, and Honor asked for the tea before she perceived to whom she was speaking. It was Conny's partner of last night, the moustached hero of the rope-walk, who weighed it out for her!

Conny behaved with great presence of mind. She turned very pale, but looked straight before her all the time the tea was being put up, and the parcel paid for by poor confused, blundering Honor. Then she said, 'Are you ready?' quite in a calm voice, and walked out of the shop with immense dignity, only quickening her pace a little when they turned the corner.

'I suppose you are very glad now?' she said in a broken voice to Honor.

'No, indeed I am not,' said Honor kindly.

'Then you need not tell them anything about it at home.'

'I shall not, if I am not asked,' promised Honor. 'Where are you going?'

'To tell the Simmonds girls. I must tell them, or they may speak to him about me, if they meet.'

They ascended the stairs leading to Mr. Simmonds's abode, and knocked several times at the door without reply.

'They are out,' said Conny, and she turned the handle. The door was locked.

An old woman with a brush in her hand came from a room behind.

'Ils sont tous partis,' she sang forth in cracked tones.

'Impossible!' cried Conny. 'Open the door for us!'

The old woman produced a key and unlocked the door, and the girls entered.

There was no mistake. The English family had evidently departed. 'Where were they gone?' The old woman did not know. All she knew was that on their return from the ball, in place of going to bed, they had packed up their trunks and had left the Arceaux in a hired carriage, before any one was stirring. They had driven towards the pier, and as a steamer bound for a Spanish port had sailed early that morning, probably they had departed in that.

The driver would know. He was the same

driver who had taken the ladies to the ball, and was well paid by Mr. Simmonds for waiting till they were ready to leave.

‘How very unkind!’ sobbed Conny. ‘They might have told me, or left a line to say good-bye, when we were such friends!’

‘Come home,’ said Honor. ‘But first I must stop at Monsieur le Bœuf’s shop with a commission from mamma.’

Monsieur le Bœuf, besides his other rôle of house-proprietor, was a thriving grocer.

They found the poor shopkeeper in great trouble.

Mr. Simmonds, of whose departure he had just heard, owed him two hundred francs! He was vehement in his inquiries from the Blakes as to where their friends were gone, and would hardly believe they did not know.

‘Every one in the town has the same tale to tell,’ he said. ‘Monsieur Soucier loses two months’ rent, and La Veuve Filet the butcher says she has not had her account settled for six weeks!’

‘As for the old concierge and the driver of the voiture, they had, without doubt, been

bribed, and ought to be punished for helping rogues to defraud honest people !'

Conny said nothing after this. Her head was aching and her throat sore, she declared when they reached home, and she went at once to her room, and excused herself from appearing at dinner.

'There is a gentleman wishes to see you, mademoiselle,' said Pauline to Honor.

Honor went into the sitting-room, and the gentleman, with a polite bow, declared his business. He had come for a trifling sum, due for the tickets of admission of mademoiselle and her sister to yesterday's ball.

Honor stammered, 'Surely Mr. Simmonds paid that ?'

'Monsieur Simmonds ? Non ; il n'a rien payé,' said her visitor, with perhaps unconscious irony.

Honor left the room to seek the twenty francs, and the gentleman courteously handed her the receipt, and left the house.

Honor's treasury was very low now, but Conny would doubtless pay for her own ticket. Meantime she feared Conny was really ill, so

she would make her some tea, and not trouble her about money that day.

‘Here is a note, mademoiselle. The boy is waiting for an answer.’

A note addressed to Miss Blake, and containing an account for ‘twelve dancing lessons, sixty francs.’

‘Do you know anything about this, Conny?’ asked Honor, as she took the tea into her sister’s room.

‘That? Those are my dancing lessons, but I paid for them all. I gave Julia Simmonds the money, and she promised to pay for mine with her own.’

Honor put on her bonnet, and followed the dancing-master’s boy to that gentleman’s house.

The votary of Terpsichore was very polite, but very firm. Miss Simmonds had paid for her own lessons, but never for Miss Blake’s. In proof of this he displayed his books.

‘I fear you must pay again, Conny.’

‘I can’t,’ said Conny. ‘There are my keys; I do not think there are more than five francs in my purse.’

Honor took out the contents of the purse,

three francs and a half, and added to it the remains of her own money. It was only fifty francs altogether. She had to ask her mother for the rest. She might as well have asked Mrs. Blake for the whole. Honor received as severe a scolding as if she had not sacrificed all she herself possessed to pay her sister's debt; but when her mother was about to go into Conny's room to finish her tirade, Honor stopped her.

'I think Conny is really ill this evening, mamma,' she said.

'Only tired from late hours,' responded Mrs. Blake. 'She shall go to no more balls;' but she forbore to disturb her.

'Honor,' said Conny, as she lifted her flushed and fevered face to her sister's that evening, 'will you make me one promise?'

'Certainly; if I can without doing any harm.'

'Never speak to me of the Simmondses or of that man in the chemist's again.'

Honor promised.

Conny slept little that night, and early in the morning she seemed so very ill that Honor, unwilling to disturb her mother, called Madame Beaulieu to see her.

‘Look how red her neck is, Madame!’

‘I see! I see!’ said the old woman. ‘It is probably small-pox. Many people in the town have had it lately.’

‘Honor!’ screamed Conny, ‘if I get small-pox you are to kill me! Do you hear? I *will not* live if I am to be a fright!’

Madame Beaulieu could not understand her words, but her excited tones and looks made her warn Honor she must keep her sister quiet, while she sought the doctor.

The doctor came, and reassured Conny as to the fate of her beauty. It was not small-pox, he said, but scarlet-fever; much had been going about lately. There had been two fatal cases in a house where Monsieur la Valle, the professor of dancing, resided.

Conny confessed to having had a sore throat and feeling rather unwell for several days past, but had been silent about it lest it should interfere with her ball-going.

‘You should try to remove the rest of your family from the infection, Madame,’ said the medical adviser to Mrs. Blake.

‘I fear—I fear,’ faltered the poor lady, ‘it is



too late. My son has been very feverish all night, and his throat is sore !'

The doctor went to Newton's room and pronounced him also stricken. Madame Beaulieu and her niece, with unselfish courage, took the children to their own rooms, and Honor and her mother continued in attendance on the invalids.

Next evening Honor herself was ill. She bore up as long as she could, but at last she called to Mademoiselle Louise over the staircase, warning her not to come nearer.

'I am getting the fever too,' she said. 'What must we do? Pauline cannot help mamma enough.'

'Il faut appeler une sœur,' said Louise.

'A Sister of Charity? Will one come to us?' asked Honor, astonished.

'Yes, certainly! Those good Sisters would go to nurse the heathen if they were needed.'

The Sister came, a sweet gentle woman, who added to the virtues common to her order the manners and breeding of a perfect lady.

Sister Justine was of noble birth, and well educated, though she did not disdain the lowest

offices in her care of the sick. She was needed sadly in that stricken Irish household, for Pauline was the next victim, then Emmy, and finally Mrs. Blake. The doctor insisted on Madame Beaulieu and her niece removing to another house, and they kindly carried Charlie with them.

Honor was the first to recover ; in fact her attack was comparatively slight, so that with a flannel round her throat, a pale face, and rather shaking limbs, she was about again, helping Sister Justine in less than a week after her seizure. Conny was very ill for a time, but the doctor feared most for Mrs. Blake. Newton's attack was less violent, but his delicate general health made even a small illness serious for him. During those ensuing weeks of racking anxiety and hard work, added to bodily weakness, which fell to Honor's lot, she learned to cling to Sister Justine, not only with love but with reverence ; and the spring of human tenderness within the nun's bosom, which diversion from its own natural objects had never dried up, flowed forth abundantly towards the red-haired stranger.

‘What a Sister she would make!’ she often

mused. 'What self-abnegation! what power of devotion in one so young! She must be intended to return to the truth at last!'

One evening the nun had gone home, promising to return at a fixed hour, and Honor sat alone in the *salon*, where with each door near ajar she could hear any call from the invalids.

She was dozing in her chair when a noise in the entrance-hall below roused her. A masculine step, different from the doctor's, ascended the stone stairs, and a voice called out in French—

'Is any one at home?'

Honor took up the candle and looked over the bannisters. A strong aromatic perfume greeted her, and she beheld Monsieur de Trouvaille with a burning pastille between his fingers, and in the other hand a handkerchief, steeped in vinegar, which he held often to his nose.

'Well,' he said, waving his hand to stop her approach, 'how are you all?'

Honor said her sisters were both a little better, her brother much the same, and her mother—she could hardly say how *she* was—no better, she feared. She thanked Monsieur de Trouvaille for coming to ask.

‘Not at all,’ he replied. ‘I wanted to know what *you* are going to do.’

‘What *I* am going to do!’

‘Yes, yes, pauvre petite! You have no other friends in France, have you? and you will have a little brother too left on your hands, I understand. There is one who has escaped.’

‘Ah, Monsieur de Trouvaille,’ cried Honor, ‘the others are not so ill as that! It is not hopeless! *I* recovered. Did Dr. Maurat tell you anything?’

‘Why, you know, pauvre petite, a fever like that’—and he snapped his fingers so incautiously that the pastille dropped and became extinguished.—‘Bon soir,’ he cried, hurriedly applying his handkerchief to his face, ‘Bon soir, pauvre petite! left alone in a foreign land! But do not fear; I will befriend you. Write to me what I can do for you; but be sure you ask Dr. Maurat to have your letter fumigated!’ and he vanished.

Honor went back to the *salon*, set down the candle, and burst out crying.

‘Qu’est-ce que c’est, donc?’ exclaimed Sister Justine on her return; ‘is any one worse?’

Honor could hardly speak for sobbing. The nun went round the sick-beds attending to the wants of her patients, satisfying herself as to their condition, then she returned to Honor, made her drink some wine, and lie on the sofa and tell her trouble. She bestowed a 'bah!' on Monsieur de Trouville, and assured the girl he was mistaken. 'As for your elder sister, she will be about again in a week, my dear, and the child is mending fast; your brother is weak, but nothing to frighten you; and as for Madame your mother, she is sleeping peacefully at this moment. Let us commit her to the Virgin Mother and her Son! You will ask the Son, my child; I, the Holy Mother. The God we worship is one and the same.'

Long after Honor's devotions were ended, and Sister Justine had bid her sleep, the other watcher knelt with her face upturned, in beautiful supplication, repeating, half aloud, prayers and intercessions that soothed Honor wondrously.

'I wish I were like you, Sister Justine,' she whispered as the Sister stooped to kiss her, after one of her pilgrimages through the sick-rooms.

‘I will pray that you may become, like me, a true daughter of the Church,’ replied the Sister, ‘and being so, may in all else be far better than I am.’

This was the last thought in Honor’s mind that night. It was the unerring truthfulness of the girl’s nature that spoke out the next day, when she said to Sister Justine—

‘I am not fit to decide the question now. If I were to become a Roman Catholic at once, it would be because I am weak, mind and body, and want to lean on you altogether; wait till I am stronger before we talk of it.’ And when Honor was strong again she talked of it, and thought of it, and Sister Justine said, somewhat bitterly, ‘the evil of early instilled prejudices prevailed.’

I am not about to enter on a polemical argument, but some would have designated the result of the conflict in the girl’s mind as the consequences of that love of naked truth which grew stronger in her year by year.

The family persecution that would have ensued had no fears for her; indeed, with an acute self-knowledge that is very uncommon,

Honor judged this among her inducements to follow Sister Justine. She knew there was that in her nature which would have found a pleasure in martyrdom.

‘I cannot be a Roman Catholic, Sister Justine,’ she said, ‘because I cannot believe all you do. I wish I could; I wish I could have the comfort of your faith; but I must follow the truth as I see it.’

‘You will end by becoming a rationalist, my child, if you think thus,’ replied Sister Justine.

‘I hope not, Sister Justine; I will think more than I have thought before of such things, and, as you bid me, I will pray; and I will read too, if I can find books that state the questions fairly; but wherever the truth leads me, *there*, please God, I will *end*. Only do not let me lose your friendship, dear Sister Justine, you to whom I owe so much!’

Even Honor’s obstinacy could not cast her out of that loving heart, and so it became a compact between them that they were still to be friends,—not without hopes of a closer union of faith, one day, on the part of the Sister.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A NEW HOME.

**M**EANWHILE Sister Justine's hopes about all the invalids were fulfilled. All recovered, and the doctor then urged Mrs. Blake to seek another dwelling, where her family would enjoy fresher air. 'It is strange,' he said, 'how habit influences us all. The people who are born and bred in our town rarely suffer from its close atmosphere; but I do not think your children, who you tell me were brought up in the country, can live within the walls.'

Then, Mrs. Blake spoke of removing to Biarritz, but the doctor feared the early spring winds there would be too severe for most of the invalids, and besides, she could there engage no rooms, except on the condition of vacating them or paying an extravagant rent during



several weeks of the summer. The doctor told them of a house near Anglet he thought likely to suit them.

There were two houses together, one on each side of a garden, which was cultivated by the landlord for market purposes. One of these houses was occupied by an English family, who were just about to leave it; the other had been vacant for some time—it might suit Mrs. Blake. Honor went to see it for her mother, and Monsieur de Trouvaille very good-naturedly helped her in her negotiations with the landlord.

In spite of his oddities the old gentleman had a kind heart, and had shown it in many little attentions to the sick family during their convalescence. The rent of the new dwelling was higher than what Mrs. Blake had paid in the Rue Porte St. Martin, but the change was absolutely necessary. The expenses which follow illness had made a great hole in the family income, and Honor grieved bitterly over the danger of their getting into debt, which she saw impending.

She confided her troubles to Sister Justine, with her wish that she could find some employ-

ment, and the energetic Sister responded to this so promptly, that Honor found herself engaged, on liberal terms, to teach English daily at the convent school, and, on four afternoons in the week, to private pupils, the lessons to commence as soon as she had settled her mother at Anglet. The daily walk presented no difficulty to her, and for wet weather the Biarritz and Bayonne omnibuses passed near their new house. At any other time Honor might have met with opposition to her plan from the Blake pride, but now, weak health and want of money had tamed them all, and they were glad to assent to anything which promised an increased income. 'You will have to teach Emmy, Conny,' said Honor.

Conny assented at first, but afterwards suggested that the little thing should be sent to the convent school. Honor would not allow this, and the matter was settled by her devoting an early hour before she left home, and one after her return, to her little sister, whose tractable nature made her not likely to get into mischief during Honor's absence.

As for Charlie, he had become so rough and

rude, and also, Honor feared, had so much deteriorated morally, during his absence from home restraints, that the only thing to be done with him was to send him to school.

Madame Beaulieu and Louise had kindly kept the boy with them during his relations' illness, but they had attempted no control and no training. He had wandered where he would, with companions of his own choosing, and greatly shocked Honor by what he had learned from them.

Monsieur Voisin recommended to Mrs. Blake a school at Rochelle, kept by a stanch Protestant, well spoken of for his care of his pupils and the instruction he imparted; and there Charlie was despatched, as soon as Honor had secured the prospect of paying by her exertions for his education.

It was on a bright spring day, such a day as forms the chief glory of southern climates, rivaling summer in sunshine, and passing it in freshness, that Honor proceeded early to their new home, in company with Pauline and numerous boxes, to make everything quite comfortable before the arrival of the rest of the household.

Mademoiselle Louise and her aunt had promised to see to Mrs. Blake's wants during the day, and in the evening she was to drive to Anglet for the night.

Honor and Pauline worked with good will, and before two o'clock everything was unpacked and arranged.

Then Pauline said she would return to the town for some things which had been forgotten, and rejoin Honor with the others.

'But Mademoiselle must dine?'

'I will have some bread and butter, Pauline. You have some here?'

'Butter, yes! but there is no bread. It will be here directly. The fat commissionnaire, Mère Quinqualeronvontroyez, is to bring it from the town this afternoon.'

'What a strange name!'

'She is a Basque, Mademoiselle, and such a droll old woman; she and her donkey!' and Pauline laughed. 'I have engaged her to do all our daily commissions in the town; to bring us bread, meat, letters from the post, and whatever else we want. Mademoiselle

Louise knows her. She can make a good bargain, and is very honest.'

'Do people always call her by that odd name?'

'The Basques do; but the town people mostly shorten it to Madame Quinquale.—Are you too hungry, Mademoiselle, to wait for the bread? How stupid of me not to bring some with us!'

'I can wait quite well, Pauline. Make haste now, or you will not do all you have to do before mamma is ready to come.'

Pauline set off, and Honor sat down to write to Lady Tracy. When that was done, she arranged some wild-flowers in the vases, and then began to wish the commissionnaire with the long name would come, for she had breakfasted early.

She walked out into the garden to watch for her,—seated herself on a mossy slope at one end, and looked round.

It was a good-sized garden, enclosed by a wall, and was half orchard, half kitchen-garden, but with rose-trees and many a blossoming shrub and sweet flower growing round the

beds in old-fashioned luxuriance. The walks, except close by the house, were grass grown, and a soft green carpet of turf was spread under the fruit-trees. It reminded Honor of Kildaggan, not from any real resemblance between the two places, but because it was the first country home she had known since she left her birthplace.

They ought to be very happy here, she thought. Her earnings would make life, as regarded money, easy, and Newton and dear Emmy would enjoy this garden. She hoped she should soon be able to buy Newton a Bath-chair.

A beautiful white goat with two kids like herself was tied under one of the trees near where Honor sat, and she was admiring it when she saw some one coming down the vine-trellised walk that led to the other neighbouring house.

It was a young lady, two or three years older than Honor.

Her lap was full of wild mint, and she knelt down beside the goat caressingly, and began to feed it.

Honor thought she had never seen any one half so lovely.

Her features were as finely shaped, her complexion as pure as Conny's, but she was much more beautiful than Conny. The exquisite setting of her head and neck shed a nameless grace over her movements; her rich brown hair and brows, and the dark lashes that shadowed blue eyes, much darker and deeper than Conny's, gave that *character* to her face which even the handsomest blondes often want; and above all, the eyes and mouth vouched that, as Lady Tracy would have said, 'a soul' dwelt within.

Honor looked at her admiringly. She fed the goat and was about to return by the path she had come by, when she saw Honor, and after a moment's hesitation she came up and spoke to her.

'We are to be neighbours for a few days at least,' she said in English. 'We are more settled than you are. Can we do anything for you?'

Honor thanked her, but said she was alone, awaiting her family, who would not arrive till evening; everything was ready for them.

‘Then, if you have not dined, will you join us?’ said the young lady. ‘I ought to introduce myself. My name is Edith Bertram. My father, with whom I live, is a clergyman.’

‘My name is Honor Blake,’ said Honor, and she began to feel as if she had known Edith a long time, even before they reached the house.

Mr. Bertram, a gentle venerable old man, evidently in weak health, was in the little sitting-room they entered. The room, with its books and flowers and piano, bore silent witness to being the home of refined tastes.

Honor had not spent so pleasant an afternoon since that one in London.

She sat with her new friends till the sound of wheels warned her of Mrs. Blake’s approach. Then she ran over to their own house with her arms full of precious books—English books—Edith had lent her.

‘I will call on Mrs. Blake to-morrow,’ said Miss Bertram.

During the afternoon, as they sat at the open window, the old Basque with the long name had brought to it her load from the town; not

---



finding Honor at home she had sought her at the Bertrams.’

She was indeed a droll old woman, with her picturesque dress, her face like wrinkled brown leather, and her extraordinary patois. She drove before her a donkey laden with panniers, to which she talked occasionally as if it were a child, the animal twitching its ears and nodding its head in a most absurd manner, now and then, as if it understood her.

‘Here is the bread, mademoiselle,’ she said. ‘I shall put that in your kitchen, shall I? And the eggs, too: such pretty little eggs, and so cheap! Ah, Coquin!’—to the donkey—‘we know how to make bargains! Don’t we, Coquin?—Your bonne gave me two francs, mademoiselle; here is the change;’ and she rendered a verbal account of the money rapidly and correctly. Then she stopped, took out a piece of knotted cord and counted the knots, murmuring—‘Un, deux, trois. Coquin, there was a third thing?’

Coquin nodded his head.

‘What was it?’ cried the dame. ‘Ah, Coquin, for shame! to forget our commissions like

this! Tenez! this is not the cord of the other house, is it? No, no!' and she drew out another cord covered with several more knots. 'That is the cord of *your* house, Mademoiselle Bertram; but the other belongs to the new English family. *You* know, Coquin. See, there it is! a new piece of cord—quite new! Now, Coquin, one, two, three—three knots; that means three commissions. The bread, one; the eggs, two;—tell me, my son, what was the third?'

The ass, which had stood immoveable all this time, twitched his ears forcibly.

'That is it!' cried his mistress. 'A letter! the letter from the post!' and from her large pocket she drew a letter, which she handed to Honor, and then moved away towards the back door, where Miss Bertram's servant stood.

'What a very funny old woman!' said Honor.

'Yes,' said Mr. Bertram, 'but she is wonderfully clever. She can neither read nor write, nor can she count beyond twenty; all her calculations are done in scores; and yet, with the help of her knotted cords, she will do the com-

missions of all the country round, and bring back all the accounts of the different sums spent clear and distinct. She rarely forgets anything, hardly ever makes a mistake. Edith has a sketch of her and her donkey.—Show Miss Blake your sketch-book, Edith; it will amuse her.'

'Let Miss Blake read her letter first, papa.'

'It is from Lady Tracy!' exclaimed Honor joyously, half to herself.

'Lady Tracy? Do you know her? Can it be the same? Does she live in Westbourne Terrace?' asked Edith earnestly.

'She is a relation of ours,' said Honor.

'Her maiden name was Blake,' said Mr. Bertram.

'Dear Lady Tracy!' continued his daughter. 'She was a great friend of my mother's. How I shall like to hear of her again!' and thus it happened that Honor and her new friends met on common ground, and that their intimacy was sanctioned on both sides by prudence, as does not always happen with English intimacies abroad.

'Mrs. Blake,' said Miss Bertram, a few days

after, 'we are going to Cambo to-morrow. My father thinks the waters will suit him, and we have taken a house there for the summer. I hope you will let Miss Blake come to see us often. It is only twelve miles from Bayonne, and there are conveyances constantly passing backward and forward. My father wants to know if your son will let him leave a Bath-chair of his for his use. My father has had a second chair sent him from England by an old friend, and he will be so glad if this one will be of service to a brother-invalid.'

Mrs. Blake was very grateful.

'The boy we have always engaged to draw the chair,' went on Edith, turning to Honor, 'will be glad to do it for you. He is called Jean Detrop, and lives with the old commissionnaire. He calls her 'grandmother,' but I have been told he is a foundling, educated from charity, and that his remarkable name is derived from his history. I do not think he is as estimable or trustworthy as the old woman, and she never sends him to execute her commissions, but she is glad when he can earn a little by odd pieces of work; and, though not very

steady, he is willing and pleasant-mannered, and will, I daresay, please your brother as charioteer, as he has done my father.'

Newton was delighted with his new acquisition, and with the change to Anglet altogether.

That was a very happy time. Through Sister Justine and M. de Trouvaille's recommendation Honor's pupils increased rapidly, and soon she found she had employment for more hours than the day contained. The hard toil never frightened her. She put her heart in the work, and got more reward out of it than its actual remuneration, valuable as that was in its power of making all at home so happy.

Highest and dearest among her home affections was her little sister Emily.

The child promised to have much of Conny's beauty, unmarred by her selfishness, and Honor, with almost maternal fondness, dwelt lovingly on the little thing's future. She should learn all that Honor had never learned, have all she had never had; all the elder sister had missed out of life should be Emmy's; and to this end many an hour of ungrudged toil was devoted. Not content with what she herself could teach

Emmy, she used to take the little thing with her daily to the convent, there to enjoy instruction in French and music, and then send her home under the care of Madame Quinqualeron-vontroyez, while she herself continued her round of lessons. Emmy was worthy of her sister's love, and loved her again fondly.

Charlie too prospered. When he came home at midsummer and Christmas he was as much improved as he was grown. Rochelle had fostered his national love of the sea, and he meant to be a sailor ere long, he declared.

Mademoiselle Louise, who had neither forgotten nor been forgotten by her English friends, introduced Charlie during his summer holidays to that sailor-nephew of Tante Beaulieu's of whom she had spoken,—a young man come home on leave from his ship.

Honor had woven a little romance of her own about this sailor. It was very evident to her that he was much charmed with the 'repasseuse,' who, as she had explained, was not his *cousin*, Tante Beaulieu being only her aunt by marriage.

This was a delightful acquaintance for Charlie,

and for all his family, as the good-natured sailor constantly took him boating and fishing, and kept his mind and time much employed, to the great satisfaction of all concerned.

Nor was Conny less happy at Anglet than the rest of the household.

When Honor received her first earnings she divided it : Charlie's education, Emmy's wants, her own and Conny's share. All these she put aside, and the remainder was to go to help the common purse.

'It is not much, Conny,' she said, 'but it is the same as my own. I shall increase both as I get more pupils (she did so). I only want to make one bargain, that we need not dress alike.'

'Agreed willingly, *ma chère*!' laughed Conny. 'Many thanks, Honor.'

Conny did not altogether like the idea of her sister being a governess, but she approved of the result.

They now lived in a much better house than they had done in Bayonne, and after Newton consented, at Honor's request, to attend the English Church service at Biarritz, which was almost as near to Anglet as Monsieur Voisin's

chapel, they began to make English acquaintances. These people would have looked on Honor's employment as derogatory, had it not happened that, foreigners not sharing in these insular ideas, several of the parents of her French pupils, people of high rank and local position, called on her; and so by degrees the Blakes found themselves in very good French society. Conny went out to more than one ball the next winter with her mother. Honor declined those invitations for herself. She had no time for society, she said; but when her holidays came, she, with Emmy, spent a charming fortnight at Cambo, and often afterwards she repeated her visits from Saturday night to Monday morning, and occasionally on Thursdays.

Thursday, the usual weekly holiday at all French schools, was not always one for Honor. She had some older pupils on that day to whom she could give no other hours. Sometimes however they were otherwise engaged, and then she had a day to give to Cambo. I cannot describe Cambo. I am a poor hand at descriptions, I fear; but does any one ever read de-



scriptions of scenery? The snowy mountain giants in the distance, the pine-clad passes below, the laughing woods and orchards upon the slopes, where Cambo nestles round its rippling streamlet—to paint those is work for the pencil, not the pen!

There, in the Bertrams' picturesque and yet comfortable home, Honor found always a welcome; there, in the beautiful Edith she found a loving sympathizing sister-soul, and in Mr. Bertram the friend, the pilot her life had always needed. From him Honor learned where lay the golden point of union between Mr. Bull's theories and Sister Justine's practice. It was he who showed her how, in words she had repeated without understanding them from her infancy, she had possessed, unknown to herself, the key of peace; how she *was* 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,' and might go on her life's journey rejoicing in her high calling, and hallowing every common task into unison with it.

No need for Honor to seek comfort in foreign communions now. The Church of her fathers had already set before her all she wanted, and

yet somehow, after Mr. Bertram's teaching, she knew she had never loved Sister Justine so well, nor felt more reverence for *the truth* in Mr. Bull's and Monsieur Voisin's doctrines.

Her new friends assisted Honor to obtain books from a good library ; and now the literature of to-day was opened to her as that of a past age had been some years ago.

What was it, she said to herself, after spending New Year's week with the Bertrams, that often made them look so sad ? It was no money embarrassment—she knew that they were comparatively rich—nor yet Mr. Bertram's health, which was better since he had settled at Cambo. It could hardly still be grief for the mother, who Edith told her had died five years before. It was, Honor thought, something, that though it pressed on both occasionally, seemed to bear with peculiar weight on Edith at times, which she laboured to hide from her father ; and whenever Mr. Bertram noticed this he would seem quite to lose his self-possession in apparent pity for his child's sorrow.

Honor had observed this one day in particular when Edith, who in music as in most other

things excelled three-fourths of her compeers, had broken down utterly while singing a ballad, burst into tears, and left the room. Mr. Bertram seemed then to forget Honor was present. He looked after his daughter for a moment, and, starting to his feet, he walked hurriedly twice up and down the room, then with a force Honor could hardly have believed remained in his feeble hand, he brought his clenched fist on the table, with some words she did not catch, but it needed only a glance at his face to see they were very angry ones.

Then he sank in a seat, and covered his face, saying—

‘God forgive me! Shall I never learn to forgive?’

Honor stole from the room. When next they met it was at table, and both Edith and her father were calm again.

‘I wish I could comfort her,’ said Honor to herself; ‘but as I can’t, her secret is not for me to pry into,’ and she put the matter from her mind as resolutely as she could.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A 'MARIAGE DE CONVENANCE.'

**H**AVE you heard that your friend Mademoiselle Louise is going to be married?' asked Sister Justine one day when she met Honor.

'No; I am so glad!'

'You do not ask to whom?'

'I can guess,' laughed Honor. 'I must go and congratulate her.'

'Then I shall walk with you,' said the Sister. 'I have an errand in the Rue Porte St. Martin. He is a worthy man,' she continued, 'and will enable her to give her aunt, who has been like a mother to her, a more comfortable home than she has hitherto enjoyed. Madame le Bœuf *mère* is, I hear, to go to her daughter at Bordeaux, and Madame Beaulieu will live with the newly married pair. I also heard Monsieur

le Bœuf speak of taking a larger shop in a better quarter of the town.'

'What are you talking of?' cried Honor.

'Of Mademoiselle Louise—Madame le Bœuf as she is to be.'

'Madame le Bœuf!! Is she going to marry *him* ?'

'Yes; did I not tell you? Where are you going? Do you not wish to congratulate her?'

'No! No!' said Honor, turning away. 'Do not ask me to go there to-day. I could not have believed it of Mademoiselle Louise!'

'What is all this?' exclaimed the Sister. 'What has she done? A dutiful modest girl about to marry a worthy man, with the approval of all her friends. Do your English ideas see anything wrong in that?'

'She cannot love him,' said Honor bluntly.

'Oh, my child! have you read romances? Love! of course she will love her husband, but you would not have her love him *first*, would you?'

'It is not very likely I shall ever be married,' said Honor; 'but if I am, I hope I shall *first* love the man I marry.'

'My child,' said the Sister gently, 'if I did not know your heart, there are times when I should think there was much evil in it. I will not talk of such things to you, and, take my advice, do not speak of them to others. Come in, and wish your friend joy.'

'Not to-day,' said Honor. 'Good-bye, Sister Justine.'

'Good-bye, headstrong romantic girl!'

'That fat old grocer!' mused Honor. 'It is all for his money, I am sure. And poor Guillaume! What will he say?'

But 'poor Guillaume' did not seem at all unhappy when he took his next summer holiday to Bayonne.

Honor was nearly as much disgusted with his philosophy as with what she deemed the mercenary conduct of Mademoiselle Louise. It was with difficulty she forced herself to speak the congratulations politeness required, and she absented herself from the group of friends invited to admire the trousseau, by a timely engagement at Cambo. She could not however deny that Madame le Bœuf seemed to be a wife as happy as she was duteous, that the stout grocer was

not only a most devoted husband, but well loved in his turn, and that their domestic felicity fell in nothing short of that of many a household where 'love came first.'

'I do not think it is a subject on which any general rule can be laid down,' said Edith, to whom she spoke of her perplexity as to the result of such 'mariages de convenance.' 'I am sure French marriages often turn out very happily; remember, the girls are educated to look on these things from the same point of view as their parents.'

'But it can't be the same,' interrupted the impetuous Honor. 'I suppose I have no right to talk because I am plain, and probably no one will ever care about me, but I am sure I could never marry except I first loved my husband better than every one else in the world put together, nor if it made any difference to me whether he were a king or a beggar. Could you, Edith?'

'I had rather not speak about it, Honor dear; whenever you do love, I hope it will be a worthy object,' and Edith's face was so pale and changed as she said this, Honor could only

be silent, and regret she had unwittingly caused her friend pain.

When I was younger I used to wish to 'see history acted.' I suppose I was too young, and the blow struck too near home for me to realize that the Indian wars which desolated our fireside in my girlhood were part of the world's history. The weary debates in the *Times* of course I scorned to consider such! Thermopylæ and Marathon, Horatius and Hannibal, Trafalgar and Waterloo, were in my mind when I uttered the above wish, not 'Reform Bills' and 'Catholic Emancipation.' My first definite recollection of the fulfilment of my desire was when, more than two decades since, a certain Mr. Smith, with his carpet-bag, left his perilous home at the Tuileries for the more safe if less glorious shelter of an English hotel. I was about to sit down to a solitary breakfast in an Indian out-station when the mail brought these tidings. I can recall the sensation as if it were yesterday. I had no one to speak to, no one who could understand the news to read it with me; all I could do with my pent-up excitement was to write a



letter about it, and send it with the hastily read newspapers, as fast as a swift horseman could carry them, to my husband, thirty miles off. So great was my pre-occupation that I actually forgot to eat my breakfast, a fact which I did not discover for several hours. I think that to-morrow's post might bring news of half the crowned heads of Europe being unthroned, without its rendering me oblivious to the sweet sound of the gong at nine A.M. I believe in those days I felt poor Mr. Smith's misadventures to be in the highest degree 'sensational,' and I fear rather agreeable, to lookers-on. If so, I have since then much changed my mind about the delights of 'seeing history acted.'

Any one who can look back along those twenty years must feel that he or she has been seeing little else done in the world; while 1854-5 and 1857 alone must have taught all English hearts how to pray, 'Give peace in our time, O Lord!' What is my moral in thus prosing? A very old and trite one! I imagine some silly young people often vary my sensational aspirations by wishing to be, in their own persons, the heroes or heroines of stories

worth telling! If they live to be so, they will be soon cured of their fancy, much as I, for the last twelve years or more, have been of mine. I know all this has been said in other words long ago, but when there are so few new things left to say, may not one repeat an old thing now and then in new words, and make it fill a page?

What led me to the subject is, that I find hardly anything worth recording to tell of the Blakes' life at Anglet for the first two years of their stay there. I have before said this was a happy time, and it is quite useless for the novelist to try to make materials out of such. Let us pass by it, and let all my young readers accept, instead of an entertaining chapter, my wish that they may lead happy lives, conveyed in the following words: 'If you ever "see history acted," may it be a long way off from you and all you love; and may your personal story never be written—for want of materials.' If you grow, under such exceptional discipline, into an intolerably selfish and unsympathetic old age, don't blame me! Shall I reverse the conditions of the wish?

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A 'MARIAGE MANQUÉ.'

**T**HAT pretty Englishwoman, the fair recluse of Cambo? It is impossible you do not know who she is, Madame.'

The speaker was a young Frenchman for whom Honor had conceived a great and perhaps unreasonable dislike. She knew very little about Monsieur le Souffleur, except that he was a clerk at a banker's office at Bayonne, that he had a rather good-looking and very *dandified* small person, and that he was a great talker, being, in fact, the prime retailer and most earnest disseminator of all the gossip of Bayonne. Whether the subject of the tale was rich or poor, high or low, the matter large or small, signified little to Monsieur le Souffleur. The latest chit-chat about the noble visitors at the Biarritz château, or the misconduct of a

cook-maid, the carefully-concealed fact that Madame Chignon had had her satin robe dyed and remodelled, or the price of the cachemire Monsieur d'Assignats had bestowed on his bride—on all these things M. le Souffleur was wont to bestow the latest information to his admiring audience at the *cafés*, at M. Trottoir's the coachmaker's (the 'Tattersall's' of Bayonne), or in the *salons* of the *élégantes* of that city.

In one of the latter he was now seated, and had been interrogated by his fair hostess about a beautiful girl she had seen when she drove to Cambo last week. The two Miss Blakes, paying a visit on the part of their mother, were present, also half the 'society' of Bayonne, it being a weekly reception of the lady of the house. Honor was about to name Edith when M. le Souffleur had spoken.

'No, I do not know her,' said his questioner. 'I never saw her till yesterday.'

M. le Souffleur made a grimace :—

'She does not seek society much now, Madame,' he said.

'Why?' cried the lady. 'Please tell me all about her. Is it very romantic?'

Monsieur le Souffleur shrugged his shoulders. 'Not very romantic. He must not say too much about it. Every one knew it, in fact.'

His audience, excited by his reticence, plied him with questions.

'I have heard of this young Englishwoman,' said one lady. 'She has a most romantic name, has she not?—Miss Edith Bertram.'

'Miss Bertram—so she is called, I believe,' sneered M. le Souffleur, 'although once at least, not many years ago, she openly renounced her maiden name for a time; but I suppose she finds it convenient to resume it, as she has never succeeded in securing the title of wife.'

At this speech all the French ladies began to giggle and to shake their heads at M. le Souffleur, telling him he was too wicked. The 'young girls' present were supposed not to hear the conversation; but Honor, who had flushed very red, then turned deadly pale, broke silence in a clear voice that commanded every ear.

'Madame Bréguet,' she said to her hostess, and her face grew red again at the sound of her own voice, 'Miss Bertram is my friend,

and Monsieur le Souffleur shall not speak against her before me. He cannot prove what he has said, and he had no right to say it. He would not have said it had Miss Bertram a brother here, or were her father other than an infirm old clergyman.'

Every one was so astonished, a dead silence ensued, which M. le Souffleur broke. He begged Miss Blake's pardon. 'He had no idea Miss Bertram was so dear to her. No doubt she knew best—he had but spoken from his information; and it was no secret that Miss Bertram's conduct as a girl had been such that she would be received in no virtuous *salon* in France,' bowing to his hostess, 'whatever she might be in liberal England.'

Then the tempest of Honor's wrath burst forth much as on the day when we first made her acquaintance. She did not *bite* M. le Souffleur, it is true, nor did she really say much; but what she did say actually scathed his ears. She told him that were *he* in liberal England, he would find a slanderer and petty gossip held but a poor place in society; she dared him to prove one word he had uttered against Edith;

and reiterated that it was easy to talk slander of a woman without male protectors.

Monsieur le Souffleur was silenced, and there was not one of his female auditors who, in spite of the fact that they habitually petted him and listened to his gossip, was not delighted at his confusion. Each and every one knew *she* in her turn fell under his venomous tongue, and all looked on his defeat as a common victory, though all were alike ready to mock at the insular impetuosity of the red-haired Irish girl as soon as her back was turned.

Honor apologized, not ungracefully, because with genuine sincerity, to their hostess for her vehemence, and took her leave, followed by Conny, who, as soon as they reached the street, began to cry.

‘I will never go anywhere with you again, Honor; you make yourself so remarkable. I never heard of anything so unladylike. Madame Bréguet had taken quite a fancy to me; and now I am sure she will think us very vulgar.’

Conny, as soon as she reached home, complained to Mrs. Blake of Honor’s conduct, not without so forcibly dwelling on Monsieur le

Souffleur's story regarding Edith that Mrs. Blake felt impelled to instigate an inquiry about her eldest daughter's Cambo friends.

The result was not satisfactory. Both Madame Voisin and the Consul's wife, as well as others Mrs. Blake consulted, agreed there was some story, no one could say what, about Edith Bertram's life not to her credit. Either she had once been married and been divorced, or had once run away with some one to whom she had never been married. No two persons agreed as to the details of the story, but all united in the opinion that it was Mrs. Blake's duty to stop Honor's intimacy with a person of such very doubtful character.

Poor Honor! She had never disobeyed her mother yet, and nothing in the new life-discipline she had acquired during the last three years had taught her *that*. She submitted sadly but patiently, and wrote to Edith that she could not, as they had planned together, spend her coming holidays with the Bertrams on a tour in the Pyrenees. Her disappointment was excessive, but all sense of it was lost for the moment in her struggle to word her letter so as



not to let Edith suspect the truth. In this she succeeded but too well.

Mr. Bertram and his daughter so little believed Honor to be coerced by her mother, that they called to know her real reason, and try to shake her resolution. The first five minutes of the interview was enough. Honor never all her life long could feign or dissemble anything. Not a word was said of Mrs. Blake's reasons; but the Bertrams read it as in an open page. The old clergyman rose hastily, and departed in anger he scarcely tried to conceal. Honor saw the tears rising in Edith's eyes, and her own rushed forth responsive. The girls clung to each other in a silent embrace, and then Mr. Bertram proudly hurried his daughter away.

Honor was friendless again, and she could scarcely keep back words of anger against her sister when the latter just then entered in a flutter of excitement about an invitation to a pic-nic Madame Bréguet was about to give.

'Lord Davenant is to be there, mamma; Miss Ledbury told me so. He is cruising in his yacht round the coast, and it is lying off Biarritz now.—What will you wear, Honor?'

'I am not going,' said Honor shortly.

'Much better you should not if you cannot keep your temper in society,' retorted Conny. —'Mamma, do you think that mauve and white organdie we saw at L'Oiseau's would look nice for the occasion, or a pale grey barège with blue ribbons?'

Honor walked away, trying to feel resignation—trying to be wiser than in the old Caven-dish Terrace days of the 'good cry.'

Lord Davenant was at the pic-nic. In fact this very English kind of entertainment was given by Madame Bréguet chiefly in his honour. Even although, as I have before said, Russian princes had sometimes condescended to lodge in the attics of Biarritz, the good people of Bayonne were not the less disposed to make much of Lord Davenant. A real English lord is never a stale or common thing. This young gentleman, in the enjoyment of his three-and-twenty years, his unencumbered property, good health, good looks, and good temper, was spending a very pleasant summer cruising about the coasts of France and Spain; and in spite of the anchorage off Biarritz being of the very worst,

he found the neighbourhood of that place, after Madame Bréguet's pic-nic, so agreeable that he put aside the remonstrances of his sailing-master, and determined to remain in the neighbourhood.

He was not far wrong when he said he had not seen so pretty a girl as Constance Blake either that season in London, or during his tour.

Conny had improved in her way as much as Honor since she came to France.

Her dress, thanks to Honor's earnings, and the constant time and pains she herself bestowed on it, was always perfect. She spoke French very prettily now, and added to her brilliant English beauty a number of little graces of manner more familiar to our continental sisters than to ourselves.

Every one who saw Conny admired her; but notwithstanding this she had now attained her eighteenth year without any prospect of admiration ripening into the desirable fruit of an eligible marriage. Frenchmen of the circles in which Conny moved do not, as a rule, marry portionless girls.

More than one had looked wistfully on the English beauty, and made tender inquiries in private about her probable '*dot*,' but the result of these had in each instance cooled the nascent flame.

Conny's only offer of marriage up to this time had come from a young English clergyman visiting the Pyrenees for his health the winter before, who had thrown himself and his curacy of sixty pounds a year at her feet, and been received with such pretty surprised amusement at his folly, that he went back to England a disappointed misogynist. Honor insisted—but then Honor was so eccentric—that Conny had treated this young man very ill, and had led him on to make the declaration at which she professed herself so astonished.

But all this, Conny felt, was only play.

The real business of her life must be to secure an 'establishment,' and the road thereto she did not see very plainly till the kind fates sent Lord Davenant and his yacht to the Biscay coast.

Now indeed the very thing she wanted seemed to lie within her grasp.

There could be no doubt about Lord Davenant's admiration for her ; no doubt either about his peerage and his means. The remaining small preliminaries were not worth thinking of—they *could* present no difficulties. On his part Lord Davenant was as well pleased with the flirtation as Conny was ; the only difference was he did not intend it should go quite so far as she did.

He had not spent four seasons in London, nor flirted for the past two summers through every sea-port of the Mediterranean and the Spanish coast, without knowing exactly where to stop. I think he and Conny were very equally matched.

She knew also where he might wish to stop, and had firmly resolved that, cost what it might, she would take him over the boundary.

That was a very gay summer at Biarritz, and Conny went to a great many parties.

She could not, it is true, persuade Mrs. Blake to allow her to be present at a ball at the Imperial château, for which her kind friend procured her an invitation, because it took place on Sunday. Conny had the good sense to turn even this disappointment to account.

When Lord Davenant, with his friend Sir Edward Wrexhill, called at the Anglet Cottage next day, and the former expressed his regret at having missed his hoped-for dance with Conny, the young lady looked very grave, and wondered he could think she would go to a ball on Sunday!

Lord Davenant thereupon thought Conny looked prettier than he had ever seen her do, and began, self-reproachfully, to surmise that the girl was a great deal nicer than he had believed,—*more like his sisters*. Conny was nearer her prize than ever before.

Meanwhile Honor, who had endured much from Conny's temper for the last two days, on this very subject, listened with such a look of surprise on her frank face that Sir Edward Wrexhill watched her with great amusement.

Lord Davenant had more than once talked of a ladies' party on board his yacht, and had planned an excursion to St. Sebastian; but unhappily the very day he had fixed for this turned out stormy, and Madame Bréguet, always timid about the sea, was so frightened at the idea of what might have happened had the

gale come on after departure, that she refused to go at all. The other *invités* followed her example, and the project fell to the ground. This was Conny's second *contretemps* during the last few weeks, and Honor was surprised to find she bore it very good-temperedly. She declared herself chiefly sorry for Charlie's sake, as he too was to have gone, and asked Honor if, to compensate the boy for his disappointment, she would join him and Conny in begging Mrs. Blake to let them hire a fishing-boat at Biarritz, for a short sail next Thursday, when Honor could go with them.

Honor was feeling some remorse for the coldness between herself and her sister that had sprung out of the Bertram affair, and eagerly seized the olive-branch Conny held out.

She felt glad too that Conny could think of, or care to enjoy, any amusement in which her titled friends had not a part.

Mrs. Blake demurred about danger, but this was overruled by the staid demeanour of the boatman, a friend of Guillaume's, whom Charlie selected, and permission was granted.

The three young people took the earliest

omnibus to Biarritz on the morning fixed, and found the bespoken boat in readiness.

Two things slightly astonished Honor as they left home that morning—one, that Charlie declined his mother's offer of refreshments to carry with them, though he had said they would not return till evening; the other, that Conny chose to wear her newest and prettiest costume, in spite of the risk of damage by sea-water.

She was however too frank herself to suspect others of a trick, and not till she found their boat close alongside of Lord Davenant's yacht did she notice where they were going.

Even then she called out to Charlie, who was steering, not to pass so near the yacht that those on board should recognise them.

Charlie only laughed, and before Honor half understood what was going on, a rope thrown from the yacht was grasped by one of their boatmen, and they were alongside the 'Pearl,' from whose deck Lord Davenant descending, offered to assist the ladies to mount.

Honor was dumb with indignation.

'Don't make a fool of yourself and me!' whispered Conny, passing her gracefully.



‘Oh, Charlie! how could you?’ cried Honor.

‘Don’t be cross, Honor!’ said the boy; ‘I did so much want to see the yacht. Come on board.’

‘No, I will not,’ said Honor; and she sat down in her seat in the boat,—a course of conduct which much embarrassed Sir Edward Wrexhill, whom his friend had sent to assist her, while he took care of Conny. The swell of the sea was heaving the little boat uneasily against the larger one, splashing those in the former with salt water occasionally, and producing a very disagreeable motion.

‘If you won’t go on board, I will!’ cried Charlie, and he scrambled up the side.

‘Can I not persuade you, Miss Blake?’ said Sir Edward; ‘if you really will not come on board the “Pearl,” I must stay here to take care of you.’

Honor felt her position was rather ludicrous, and that perhaps she would do best to follow Conny, so she rose, rather ungraciously, then said—

‘Will the boatmen be sure to wait here for us?’

'I will tell them to do so,' said Sir Edward, and so he did.

Then Honor in silence accepted his hand, and he escorted her on board the yacht.

Charlie was already at the far end of the vessel, watching a group of men employed about the cable.

Honor sat down, stiff and uncomfortable, and after a few minutes she said—

'Conny, I suppose you have seen all you want to see.—Sir Edward Wrexhill, will you tell my brother it is time for us to go home?'

'Impossible!' cried Lord Davenant; 'breakfast is just ready.—Wrexhill, give Miss Blake your arm;' and he led Conny to the cabin, where a delicate feast was spread.

Charlie soon appeared, and busied himself with his breakfast; only, as a good deal of moving about on the deck went on, he winked to Conny, who pretended not to notice his signals.

Honor ate little. She was very anxious to be gone, and when the heaving motion ceased, and the vessel began to lean over on one side, an undefined fear made her start up, crying—

'We really must go home now, Conny!'

All present laughed, and the rushing of the water past the port-holes told her the truth. The yacht was under sail, going away before a fair breeze.

‘Where are our boatmen?’ she cried.

‘Half way back to Biarritz,’ said Charlie, laughing.

‘And where are we going?’ asked poor Honor.

‘Only to St. Sebastian,’ said Lord Davenant. ‘Miss Constance wishes to see something of Spain. Do not be afraid, Miss Blake; we will take you safe home again.’

‘Do not be such a dreadful goose, Honor!’ whispered Conny angrily, and she took her host’s arm to go on deck.

Conny had calculated this little move with wonderful cleverness for her years and small knowledge of the world.

She had seen for the last week that some ‘coup’ was necessary to bring Lord Davenant to the point, and she had resolved to risk everything to win.

She was afraid to go on board the yacht without Honor’s protection, but once there,

she hoped to play her cards so well that she would return from Spain Lord Davenant's affianced bride at least.

She knew there was an English clergyman at St. Sebastian, and sometimes she thought that by a timely display of innocent fear as to the world's verdict on her excursion, she might so work on Lord Davenant's feelings of honour as to tie the knot there.

It would be hard, no doubt, to do without the white satin and honiton, the bridesmaids and the favours, but to be my Lady Davenant would make up for all.

Had Conny enjoyed the blessing of a sister like herself, I am not prepared to say success might not have attended her efforts; but Honor spoiled everything.

Had the elder sister contented herself with remonstrances or even tears, it would not have signified; perhaps, by awakening in the most natural way Conny's latent sense of her equivocal position, it might have done good, but in place of this, Honor proceeded with white cheeks and compressed lips to where Sir Edward Wrexhill stood.

‘Sir Edward,’ she said, ‘when you promised that our boatmen should not leave the yacht I thought I might trust your word.’

Sir Edward, who had absented himself from the breakfast-table on the plea of letters from England to answer, before the vessel moved, looked greatly annoyed.

‘I did promise you, Miss Blake; and I told the boatmen to wait,’ he said. ‘I did not know of the orders to make sail till we were off, and then I understood it was at your desire.’

‘Not at mine,’ said Honor. ‘Oh, what shall I do!’

Sir Edward was touched.

He had been bored by the whole affair, and was far from admiring his friend’s new acquaintances; but now he seemed to recognise the difference between Honor and her sister.

‘Did you not know you were coming here, then?’

‘Oh no! We only settled to go for a sail, and mamma will be so anxious!’

‘If you wish to go back to Biarritz at once, shall I ask Lord Davenant to return?’

‘I shall be so very, *very* thankful!’

'I will try; meantime let me give you a seat here, and this rug, for the breeze is cold.'

Then he went up to Lord Davenant and called him aside.

'What do you mean to be the end of this?' he asked.

'The end? The end of our voyage? The yacht's head is straight for St. Sebastian.'

'And when you get there, what do you mean to do?'

'To dine, I suppose. What are you cross-questioning me about?'

'I mean, what will you do with the Miss Blakes?'

'Well, as to *Miss* Blake, the red-haired and *sweet-tempered*, I mean to leave her to *you*. I can't tell why she came, as she seems so cross about it. Quant à la petite Constance—'

'Yes; well, what of her?'

'My dear fellow, Miss Constance is old enough and sharp enough to take care of herself. She came here of her own accord; almost at her own invitation.'

'That may be; but you forget that, while you are aware of the fact, she probably is igno-

rant that she is sacrificing her good name by the step.'

'I do not see it at all,' said his friend. 'I mean no harm. She has the red-haired sister to take care of her. I will take them back safely.'

'Take them back now.'

'Why?'

'Because you will be sorry for it, if you do not. They are *ladies*, well-born and unprotected, save by that silly mother. That alone ought to make you treat them well.'

'Why did they come on board the "Pearl," then, O squire of distressed dames?'

'The elder sister was entrapped into coming by the boy and the younger one. *She* most likely came because she believes you are *in earnest*. You know best whether she is right?'

'*In earnest!* I should think not! Tell Larpent to put her about, and make for Biarritz, will you?'

'Miss Blake,' said Sir Edward, rejoining her, 'we are on our way back to Biarritz now. I grieve to tell you that with the wind as it now

is, the distance we have come in less than an hour we shall not retrace in three, but we shall be there before sunset. Will you come to where your sister is sitting ?'

'I shall never forgive you, Honor!' hissed Conny in her sister's ear, when she sat down beside her. She had heard the orders to return, and knew it was Honor's doing.

The hours of that afternoon seemed very long to Honor.

Their retrograde course was neither a straight nor a smooth one. The 'Pearl' leaned over, first to one side, then to the other, as they tacked, and more than once the sea broke over her deck, so as to elicit unaffected screams of fear from Conny, and considerably alarm Honor, whose head ached severely.

But no fear or discomfort was half so terrible to her as the fact that, about three-quarters of an hour after Sir Edward had promised their return, she saw the distance between the yacht and the shore visibly increasing. She watched the coast with straining, longing eyes. It grew fainter and fainter, and at last she could doubt no longer.



Rising from the place where she and Conny sat covered with shawls and rugs by the care of their hosts, she disentangled herself from the wraps, and staggered with difficulty to her feet.

‘Where are you going?’ cried Conny; but Honor answered not.

Catching first at one thing, then at another, in her unsteady progress, stopping now and again to prevent herself from falling altogether, and once considerably splashed by a sea that dashed over the deck, she made her way towards the spot where stood Mr. Larpent, the sailing-master, with his hands in his pockets, gazing seawards.

‘What do you want, Miss Blake? Can I do anything for you? Will you lie down in the cabin?’ asked Sir Edward Wrexhill, following her.

For all answer, Honor only vouchsafed an indignant look, and the words, ‘I thought I might trust your promise,’ while a little accelerated movement she made to reach Mr. Larpent’s side, nearly precipitated her into the embrace of that astonished tar.

He put out his arm to keep her from falling, and Honor clung to it as to that of a protector.

'Are you the person who sails this ship?' she cried; 'who gives the sailors their orders which way to go?'

'I am the sailing-master, mum. My Lord gives us our orders; I carry them out.'

'Then take us back to Biarritz! Do, do, if you have any feeling! I will pray for you all my life, if you will only take us back!'

'We are going back to Biarritz, mum,' said the stolid Mr. Larpent, 'as fast as she can make way in this breeze; and a very nasty berth it is when we get there.'

'Then why are we going so far from the land?'

'Why, mum, of course we must *tack*. She can't sail in the wind's eye. We'll tack again in half an hour, and then you'll soon see the land getting nearer.'

Sir Edward had refrained from interrupting Honor's conversation, but now he spoke:—

'If you can believe Mr. Larpent, Miss Blake, may I take you back to your seat?'

Honor felt very much ashamed. She said

'Thank you' to Mr. Larpent, took Sir Edward's arm because she could not move without help, and walked back towards Conny in silence; but before she reached her sister's seat, she stopped and said—

'I beg your pardon; I ought not to have distrusted you.'

'Not at all,' replied her companion; 'I can quite sympathize with you. I ought to have explained to you that we must first stand out; I forgot you could not understand such nautical vagaries.' Then he continued with real concern, 'Your dress is quite wet, Miss Blake. I hope you will not catch cold. Let me wrap you up warmly;' after having done which he sat beside her, lightening the hours of their somewhat rough and, to Honor, tedious voyage by pleasant conversation, explaining to her the whole mystery of 'beating to windward,' and telling her a great deal about the yacht; then talking of her favourite books, and a hundred pleasant topics.

Honor found him so different from what she had fancied him to be,—so different, as indeed he was, from his younger and shallower friend.

'I shall not readily forgive myself,' said her squire, looking in her pale face, after in vain trying to tempt her to eat something (Conny was making a capital luncheon in spite of the wind), 'for allowing your boatmen to leave after you trusted them to me. I am afraid you have had a miserable day. Can I do anything for you to make up for it?'

Honor grew red and looked down.

'I think you can,' she said in a low voice, 'but I hardly like to ask you.'

'You may trust me, Miss Blake.'

'If you could get Lord Davenant to leave Biarritz altogether for a time, it would be so much better; at least I am nearly sure it would be!'

'I understand you, and you are quite right. He has *no* object in staying here except amusement; I know he has not; and I will make him leave as soon as I can.'

'Thank you!' replied Honor; and nothing further was said.

The shore of Biarritz became more and more distinct, the 'Pearl' reached her anchorage, and the gig was lowered. Lord Davenant, with protestations of sorrow at the too-speedy

termination of their trip, declared his intention of escorting the young ladies home, and Honor was very glad that Sir Edward accompanied them. She felt it a sort of protection. For now a terrible danger raised itself before her.

All the fashionable world of Biarritz was on the beach at this hour; and she and Conny, protected only by Charlie, who would count for nothing, would be seen by every one landing from the English nobleman's yacht, attended by him and his friend.

Honor shrank abashed from such disgrace.

In the cause of right she would have braved all these people's tongues unflinchingly, and if slandered untruly she would not so much have cared; but she could not bear that the world should say *with truth* that the Miss Blakes had so far forgotten themselves.

Sir Edward seemed to read her thoughts, for he turned the boat's head towards a little bay more retired than the rest of the shore, and there ran it up to the landing-place.

The respite was however but for a moment, Honor knew. To reach the Anglet road they must pass through these crowds; and poor in-

deed was the hope that every one would not know whence they came.

Just then she caught sight on the little pier they were approaching of Mr. Bertram and Edith, and, springing on shore as the prow touched the stone, in one moment she was by their side.

'Dear Edith! Oh, Mr. Bertram! If you please, will you let us go with you? I will tell you all afterwards!'

Edith assented before her father could demur, and Honor kept fast hold of her hand, and drew her so rapidly among their group that even a bystander could hardly have told the Bertrams also had not landed from the boat.

To Honor's surprise, both the English gentlemen greeted Mr. Bertram and his daughter as old acquaintances; and she felt Edith's hand tremble in hers as Sir Edward drew near on Miss Bertram's other side, and said in a low voice—

'I never hoped to see you here.'

Edith tried to answer naturally, but Honor saw it was a vain effort.

The party walked together across the gay beach in embarrassed silence.

Mr. Bertram looked greatly surprised. Of course Honor could not enter into explanations there, and remembering their last meeting, she also felt he was with justice stiff and cold. However, seeing the girls wanted help, he would not refuse it to them.

‘How are you going home, Miss Blake?’ he said. ‘We have a carriage here; will you let us take you as far as Anglet?’

Honor accepted this offer gratefully, and Conny could not gainsay her sister. Lord Davenant and his friend accompanied them to where the calèche stood.

The ladies and Mr. Bertram got in, Charlie mounted the box, and they drove off.

Conny was vexed at missing the walk to Anglet—more vexed, perhaps, to notice that Lord Davenant never looked after them.

He had turned to speak to Madame Bréguet, who came up just as they moved away.

It was Sir Edward Wrexhill who stood gazing after the calèche. He had scarcely spoken, except those few hurried words Honor had caught, his manner was altogether pre-occupied, and his adieux hardly intelligible.

Edith too looked as if she, for the first time during their friendship, were not listening to or caring for Honor, but thinking of something far away.

Honor found the whole *onus* of the explanation to Mr. Bertram thrown on herself, and, though he was perfectly courteous, he was very cold, and inclined to be critical. She did not wish to blame Conny, who sat in sullen silence, and felt she blundered terribly between her regard for truth and her desire to screen her sister, when telling her story to such an unsympathizing listener.

It was a painful drive, and the end of it was nearly the worst, when Mr. Bertram said stiffly—

‘Good-bye, Miss Blake. Under the circumstances, I daresay your mother will not be annoyed at our having brought you home.’

‘O papa!’ pleaded Edith.

‘Thank you very very much, Mr. Bertram.—Good-bye, dear Edith,’ said Honor, kissing her friend.

Conny went in-doors with scarcely a civil adieu.



## CHAPTER XV.

### EDITH'S HISTORY.

**W**HEN, three days afterward, the Blakes heard that the 'Pearl' had sailed for Gibraltar, poor Conny's feelings amounted almost to despair.

Honor was really sorry for her, and as it could have done no good to tell Mrs. Blake and Newton of the yachting adventure, she forebore all mention, at home, of how that day had been spent.

Strange to say, the world of Bayonne did not seem cognisant of the story. Even Monsieur le Souffleur, by some extraordinary chance, overlooked it, though he was not sparing of ill-natured comments on Conny's presumed disappointment at Lord Davenant's desertion.

The day on which Honor heard of the

'Pearl' having left Biarritz, she was passing from one of her pupils to another, when she met Sir Edward Wrexhill.

The sight of him surprised her, and for the moment led her to think the news of Lord Davenant's departure was not true; but he soon undeceived her.

'Well, Miss Blake,' he said, 'you see I have kept my promise, though, in so doing, I have lost my own passage home.'

'Why did you not go too?' said Honor, and then grew red, feeling she had made rather a rude and inquisitive speech.

'Because, thanks to you, I have found something to keep me at Bayonne.—How long have you known Miss Bertram?'

'For more than two years,' replied Honor, looking up, her whole face lighted with unspoken praises of her friend.

'And you love her as she deserves? I see that, without being told, Miss Blake. Two years? that was soon after I saw her last.'

They had now reached the house to which Honor was going, and she had to bid him good-bye.

‘We shall meet often again, I hope,’ he said cheerfully.

I trust no moralist will blame Honor too severely, in that she did not give quite her usual attention to the English pronunciation of the *desdemoiselles Bréguet*.

A vision of Edith’s brow, crowned with orange blossoms—all the shadows that were wont to pass across it swept away for ever, and Sir Edward Wrexhill by her side, would come between the teacher and the book that morning.

More than two years had elapsed since Sir Edward Wrexhill, spending the winter in Rome, had there become intimate with Mr. Bertram and his beautiful daughter.

One happy week had glided into another, and admiration for Edith had ripened into love, which he believed was not without its echo in the girl’s heart.

At last he spoke of what he felt, and asked her to be his wife, and then Edith, with untold anguish written on her face, got up and left him.

An hour afterward he received a few lines

from her, briefly telling him she could not marry him, and begging him to ask neither for explanation nor for another interview, but to forget her.

The Bertrams left Rome the following week, and Sir Edward had not seen or heard of them since, till the day he met Edith on the Biarritz pier. Her demeanour on that day convinced him that she was as far from forgetting the past as he was, and that no indifference had prompted her refusal. He fondly hoped, whatever might be the difficulties that had then existed, time had obviated them; at any rate, he resolved to remain at Bayonne, and, as soon as he had fulfilled his promise to Honor by seeing the 'Pearl' under weigh, to seek out Edith once more, and urge his unshaken constancy and patience, in favour of his suit being heard anew.

Whenever he thought of the expression of her face on their last unexpected meeting, fresh hope rose in his heart, and he felt kindly toward Honor, both as the friend of his beloved, and as the unconscious means by which he had found her again. Honor did not see Sir Edward Wrexhill for several days after this.

In the meantime she received a letter from Lady Tracy, which I shall give here :—

‘ WESTBOURNE TERRACE,  
24th August 1856.

‘ MY DEAR HONOR,—I am going to begin by scolding you. Why did you not tell me at once about your trouble regarding Edith Bertram? Why did you “shrink from tormenting me” about a matter so serious to you as this broken friendship? However, as you felt *at last* that you “could not write to me again without confiding your sorrow,” I shall, in consideration of your amendment, forgive your previous folly. If people are to be friends, my dear child, it implies that they are to bear one another’s burdens, not only share each other’s pleasures. If you tell me only what is agreeable in your life, you fulfil but half our bargain. Remember this for the future; and for the present, as it happens, I can, I believe, do much to cure your trouble; that is, I can (believing as I do your mother to be a woman of candour and charity) obtain for you permission to renew your friendship with Edith Bertram, but this by telling you such a sad tale it will wring your heart, as it

has done mine, many a time when I have thought of it. I told you, on your first acquaintance with the Bertrams, that they were valued friends of mine. I did not then think it needful to confide to you their sad story, one which could make no difference in the esteem in which right-minded people hold them, but as the Bayonne world has garbled the tale I shall now tell you the truth.

‘Edith is an only child. Her mother was one of my great friends—a most sweet woman. Her father was always delicate in health, and something of a book-worm; and though he had private fortune, besides his living, they did not go into society a great deal, but lived in rather a retired way,—he devoted to his books, while Edith and her mother did much of the active parish work.

‘Six years ago, when Edith was seventeen, a man, I cannot call him a gentleman, came on an artist’s tour to the beautiful Westmoreland glen where they lived. I do not know how he made their acquaintance, or how he gained their confidence, but within a very short time he was engaged to Edith, and the marriage took

place soon after, her father performing the ceremony.

‘Some weeks later, before the bridal pair had returned from their wedding tour, Mr. Bertram received a letter (with indisputable proofs enclosed) telling him that the man who had married his child had already another wife.

‘The father of course went at once to seek Edith, and at his approach her false husband fled.

‘They have never heard of him since. It broke Mrs. Bertram’s heart. She never looked up afterwards, and Edith was obliged to rise from her own anguish to comfort her widowed father. This she has done nobly. They have since then been wanderers, partly for his health, partly because neither could bear the pitying eyes of those who knew them in other days.

‘From first to last Edith’s conduct was all that was beautiful. She has since then, I know, had more than one offer of marriage, but will accept none—not I believe from any lingering affection for the villain who blighted her life, but that her fine moral sense forbids her to marry again while this Mr. Vaughan is alive.

‘Her father would for this reason be glad to

have proofs of his death, but no clue has ever been found to his whereabouts since the day he forsook Edith on hearing that his crime was discovered.

‘Now you know the whole story. You know how little any wise or good person could blame Edith for what happened, and you know how much truth lay at the bottom of the sneers of the French “petit-maitre.”

‘By the way, Miss Blake, was it the march of female progress, or the lingering traditions of the days of “Brian-Boru,” with a touch of “Donnybrook Fair,” that impelled a young lady to engage in single combat with a gentleman “almost a stranger” to her! Do not mind my laughing at it! I cannot help it, but I honour you exceedingly for having, as you say, “got in a rage” on that occasion.

‘And now, after my sad story, I must change the subject to one which ought to be cheerful, though I confess I am so selfish as not to feel very lively about it.

‘Isabel Wedderburn, whom you saw at my house, is going to be married. The match is one of which we all entirely approve. Mr.



Robertson, her *fiancé*, is not only well born and well to do, but will I believe make an excellent husband.

‘I must not complain too much at losing my companion, my child, as I had learned to consider her, especially as my own dear daughter Annie will, please God, return to England with her husband and children next spring.

‘Colonel Langston has quite decided on taking his furlough then, and Georgy, who with her little girl has been staying with her sister at Simla, thinks of accompanying them. I may thus hope, before this time next year, to have my two daughters, one of my sons-in-law, and four of my grandchildren with me, besides my son!

‘Shall I not be a lucky old woman? And meantime, because last year I suffered a good deal from bronchitis, and because Tom insists I shall be so lonely without Isabel, who is to be married in October, and spend some months in Italy, he has nearly persuaded me to go to France for the winter.

‘Is there a house near you where I could spend some time comfortably? Tom would bring me over, and could be with me occasion-

ally. I do not feel equal to much moving about, but a settled home for a while, near relations, in such a place as you describe Bayonne to be, holds out great charms to me. Also I want to see more of you all than I have done, especially of you, dear Honor; so let me hear all particulars about any available houses. With best love to you all, your affectionate old cousin,  
HONOR TRACY.'

It cost Honor an effort to keep in silence this letter by her till a favourable moment,—till dinner was over and she had returned from her afternoon pupils, and finished Emmy's lessons, and read to Newton the last pages of a book he liked, while he lay, as was his custom on those golden autumn evenings, under the shade of the trees where Honor had first seen Edith, reclining in his invalid-chair, Mr. Bertram's gift. Honor had grown wiser since the day she first proposed to go to school. She helped Pauline to arrange the tea-table on the grass, and with her own hands made a dainty dish of 'potato cake,' her skill in which accomplishment was quite a triumph of the union of theory and

practice, the dexterous art of cooking learned from Mademoiselle Louise, grafted on her recollections of Peggy M'Carthy's handiwork which she had often watched at Kildaggan.

Newton was especially partial to this dish of his native land ; and pleased—as what man or boy is not ?—at his sister's considerate attention to his palate.

Sullen Conny made no move now-a-days to help him or anybody. She herself would have said she was grieving for the absent Lord Davenant ; we may believe, without much breach of charity, that her red eyelids were rather worn for the loss of his prospective title.

But even Conny was a little more cheerful this evening. She had brought out her embroidery to the garden, and sat silent, but without open evidence of her ill-temper.

Charlie, home for his holidays, had lured Emmy away down the vine-walk, to show her a squirrel's nest among the tall trees of the hedgerow beyond.

Mrs. Blake, looking much younger and happier than she had done for many years past, was knitting by Newton's side ; a great peace

had spread itself over the home circle, and then Honor believing the opportunity to be a happy one, took out Lady Tracy's letter, and read Edith Bertram's history to her mother.

'A very extraordinary story!' said Mrs. Blake, laying down her knitting. 'Very extraordinary and—'

'Very improper, *I* think;' said Conny.—'You see, Monsieur le Souffleur was right after all, Honor, in spite of your rudeness to him.'

Conny had not forgotten how Honor had caused the 'Pearl' to return to Biarritz, and was little inclined to spare her sister's friends.

She went on, 'It is all very well for Lady Tracy to say what she does; she is an old lady, and of fixed position in society. She may choose to receive *any one*; but as for Honor's continued intimacy with Miss Bertram, it seems to me, mamma, it is out of the question. With such facts it does not much matter whether the affair was misfortune or fault; of course the relations are right to call it *misfortune*!'

Mrs. Blake opened her eyes at her daughter's worldly-wise eloquence.

Conny had been since her infancy a standing

astonishment to all those around her, for her premature, and, as it appeared, intuitive proficiency in Macchiavellian wisdom.

But before Mrs. Blake had time to frame her acquiescence into words, or Honor's indignation could burst forth, Newton spoke.

We have stigmatized Newton as selfish.

Is there one among us who could say that, tried as he was, we would be otherwise? Who has counted the weary hours of the cripple's day,—the pains and weaknesses that hover, constant visitors, round his couch,—the hope deferred, the privation from all the busy interests and amusements of others, that make up the lot of the life-long invalid! Let us count these; let us think how *we* could bear them, and not till then let us sneer at Newton's selfishness!

I have before this said that the boy possessed a fine mind, which of late years had received more extended culture than formerly, through means of the books Honor brought into the house, and through association with a wider range of society.

Honor and he had a good deal in common

now intellectually, and he really was beginning to love his ugly sister a little. He also liked both Mr. Bertram and Edith a good deal, and had lately much missed their society; but besides this, in spite of his somewhat hard Puritanism, Newton had a good heart, and when not blinded by his selfish wishes an acute sense of justice. He could see, if Conny could not, the difference between a misfortune and a fault.

In his rigid code, Conny's trip in the 'Pearl,' had it become known to him, would have seemed an irremediable disgrace—a shameful crime; but he could, and did, take Lady Tracy's view of Edith's history, and spoke out his conviction boldly.

Mrs. Blake always listened deferentially to Newton's wishes, and of late the sickly lad had begun to assume an authority something different from that formerly yielded to him as a spoiled child.

His invalid habits and serious turn of thought made him seem older than he really was, and when he spoke as he did now, as 'head of the family,' none of his womenkind were wont to oppose him.

Conny shrugged her shoulders indeed, and signified her dissent by her looks during his speech, and even when he had ended reiterated her previous arguments; but Newton carried the day, though not without some qualms of doubt on his mother's part, lest Conny's prophecy of the world's verdict on their renewed intimacy with the Bertrams should prove correct. However, she dared not oppose Newton, so his proposal that Honor should pay a conciliatory visit to Edith the next day (this was Wednesday), was received with silent consent by Mrs. Blake, and with grateful delight by Honor herself.

Honor had planned to catch the first Cambo omnibus the next morning, but a thousand little hindrances came in the way of her early walk.

Madame Quinqualeronvontroyez had to receive her directions for the market, and Pauline, to whom Honor had explained them the night before, was ironing a jupon for Constance.

No one except Pauline and Honor could understand or be understood by the old Basque messenger, and Pauline said Mademoiselle Constance wanted the petticoat 'à l'instant

même,' so Honor had to go to the door and engage in a lengthy colloquy with Coquin and his mistress, neither of whom, it appeared, could transact any business without as much *talk* as if they had been members of Parliament in their places in the House.

Then Newton wanted Honor to find a book for him, which she did cheerfully; and less patiently at heart, though with no outward symbol of discontent, she had to listen to her mother's *réchauffé* of the whole conversation of yesterday, and her reiterated fears lest Conny should be right after all.

Mrs. Blake did not however recall the permission granted her daughter to go to Cambo; so, as soon as a pause in the lecture allowed her to slip away, Honor hurried to her room. The omnibus passed the corner of the Anglet road at nine o'clock, and it was now five-and-twenty minutes past eight. If she were very quick she might yet be in time.

Where were her boots? Not in their usual place. So she ran down to the back-kitchen, where Pauline had left them.

As she sat on the lowest step of the stairs



lacing them, the good-natured French girl came from Conny's room full of regrets.

'Would not Mademoiselle have some breakfast before leaving? She had everything just ready, had meant to serve it in better time, but that "vilain jupon" had occupied her all the morning.'

Honor had intended, the family breakfast hour being nine o'clock, to take an earlier meal by herself, but now there was not a moment to lose.

'No, thank you, Pauline,' she said, as she fastened her last boot-lace, 'I really cannot stay;' and she was off before Pauline could remonstrate.

She ran down the garden and along as much of the way as lay through the fields, only slackening her pace to the very quickest walk permitted by 'les convenances' when on the high road.

Which of us has not made a similar race to catch some train, or steamer, or other conveyance? and however light the occasion for haste may be, however short the interval before the next opportunity of proceeding will occur, I

---

fancy the feelings are nearly the same. Many years ago, when the overland mail to India was still a new thing, and the steamers ran only monthly, I heard a lady relate that, being about to rejoin her husband in India, she missed the Southampton steamer, and with her baby in her arms she travelled by train and diligence to catch that taking the mails from Marseilles, a feat rarely attempted by passengers in those times.

I wonder what the difference in nervous excitement was between the feelings of that journey and those with which one takes tickets for Sydenham at Victoria while the engine is hissing, and the bell ringing outside, and every second seems an hour!

I wonder too why it is that to have missed a train causes such a dreary miserable sensation, quite apart from the point of inconvenience or disappointment at issue. Is it not that the sense of *failure* then sweeps over us with such prophetic warning, that the voice of life's accumulated experience then rings in our ears and hearts, telling us that time and space are our masters, and will conquer the strongest of us at last!

Perhaps the lady I spoke of above, in the supreme moment which decided whether or not she was in time (I am glad to say she was), felt that the excitement of the race swallowed up the recollection of the magnitude of the stake. If not, one can hardly understand how she could bear the ordeal; but I think the lonely night hours and long days of that weary yet sluggish transit must have been full of torture—torture quite outweighing even all the loss, inconvenience, and pain her delay for another month would have inflicted on herself and her husband: the torture of passive suspense, with possible failure behind it.

And so Honor turned sick with disappointment when a hundred yards before she gained the cross-roads she saw the omnibus rattle past, as hopelessly out of her reach as if it had been yesterday's conveyance in place of to-day's. After the first involuntarily quickened movement, she walked that last hundred yards very slowly and sadly.

What should she do? Another omnibus left Bayonne at twelve, and though this would not take her to Cambo till two, and she must leave

again at five, it would give her two hours at least with Edith. She certainly would not go home again now. She had not visited Madame le Bœuf for a long time. She would go there. She found her friend as *gentille* as ever, and passed a very pleasant morning with her and the pretty baby girl, which she admired nearly enough to satisfy even Tante Beaulieu, who firmly believed that infant to surpass all others in France, or the world, in beauty and intelligence.

Madame le Bœuf gave her visitor a very welcome breakfast of chocolate and rolls, and Monsieur le Bœuf, with the untiring politeness of his nation and class, escorted her to the mid-day Cambo omnibus.

During the first two miles of her way Honor was occupied with somewhat wondering thoughts of the happy household she had just left, and then the roadside scenery, clad in its reddening autumn beauty, attracted her eye and mind. Honor loved nature with all her heart—a very precious gift to possess if we but knew it.

Every changing autumn leaf or sunny summer glade, every twig whitened with hoar-frost, or

spring-blossom in its setting of meadow-green, brought her a thrill of pleasure. To catch one breath of air laden with floral perfume or ocean brine, or the strange fresh scent of falling autumn leaves, yielded her more enjoyment than does the richest banquet to an epicure. Fine sense of pure pleasure, most vivid in early youth, lasting shorter or longer as our lives are steeped more or less deep in worldly strife, till at length it is dulled, if not quite stifled, and comes at best but now and then to visit us—but now and then; just enough to remind us that, though the dial of our life has long since pointed past the mid-day hours, it is veering round. The night is coming, and then once more the morning—a morning in which most surely all that was pure and lovely in the first morning shall return magnified a hundred-fold.

But Honor was not one of those who soon get out of joint with nature. She has many a year of that young freshness before her yet.

It was not till the woods of Cambo were in sight, and its streams glistening in the sunlight before her eyes, that she recurred to a subject

of thought which had kept her awake half last night—to Edith and her sorrows.

She never doubted that Edith would receive her lovingly, and understand without words that their late separation was none of Honor's fault. The uncertainty that had spoiled her sleep was about Sir Edward Wrexhill.

What did he know of Edith's story? That he loved her, and was beloved again, Honor never doubted; and when she recalled his joyous mien when she last saw him only three days ago, she hoped so earnestly, that hope became belief, that he knew in some mysterious way, Honor did not care how, of the false husband's death, and that Edith would become his wife.

She was wrapped in this day-dream when the vehicle stopped, and she got down to walk along the half-mile path by the side of a sparkling brook, under reddening forest trees, which led to Mr. Bertram's house. She had scarcely passed the stile which led into the wood when, looking up, she saw a gentleman coming towards her.

It was Sir Edward Wrexhill, and one glance

at him dissipated all Honor's airy castles in a moment.

The ashen hue of despair was on his face, and gave it such terrible sternness Honor hardly knew him.

Her vivid imagination leaped, as hearts like hers will, to the conclusion that something terrible, mayhap that most terrible thing, 'the life which we call death,' had befallen her friend.

In a moment she was beside him, careless of all the courtesies of society, asking two questions: 'What is the matter? Has anything happened to Edith?'

Her agitation did Sir Edward good. It recalled him to himself, and made him face his trouble, and see that, terrible as it was, there was a worse 'might be' still shadowed in fearful Honor's words. Also it brought him a great comfort in the knowledge of how well that impetuous Irish girl, whom he had liked and trusted ever since their meeting on board the 'Pearl,' loved his poor blighted treasure.

He reassured Honor about Miss Bertram's health, and then turning slowly he retraced

his steps by her side, while they talked of Edith.

‘You know her history?’ asked Sir Edward.

Honor said she had heard it all the day before from Lady Tracy.

‘Then I need hardly tell you the rest,’ he went on. ‘You can guess how I love her! Love seems a cold word beside what I feel for her, Miss Blake; and she returns it. She has told me so; but she feels herself bound to that villain while he lives. She has told me all to-day. God forbid I should seek to shake her resolution. She is purer and wiser than I am. All I can do is to go away from her, and pray and hope that time may bring her freedom. What am I saying? Even now she may be free; but we can never hope to know it, and until she knows it she will not marry. Every trace of him has been lost from the moment of his flight. If there were the smallest clue I would follow it while I lived; but there never was one, not the very slightest.’

Honor could only in reply offer her sympathy, and Sir Edward commended Edith to her friendship.



‘Tell her you know all, Miss Blake,’ he said. ‘I believe if any one can comfort her it will be you. Now, good-bye, and remember, if ever you hear of him—. But this is folly; how could *you* do so?’

‘I might,’ said Honor.

‘Then if ever you do, be he alive or dead, lose not one moment in letting me know,’ and he gave her his card.

Honor promised. He wrung her hand, said, ‘Tell Edith I will never forget,’ and went away again along the woodland path, walking swiftly, and never looking back.

Honor proceeded very sadly on her way to her friend’s house. She felt a little timid when she entered, especially as the servant said Miss Bertram was in her room, and she really dreaded a meeting with Mr. Bertram. Risking the danger of intruding, she slipped up-stairs to Edith’s door and knocked.

‘Who is there?’ said Edith’s voice, faint and low.

‘It is I! Honor. Let me come in, dear! *He* told me to try to comfort you,’ and as she spoke she opened the door, first a little bit,

then entered and closed it again, and her arms were round the sorrow-stricken figure that rose to meet her.

There were no more reserves — no more secrets between the friends now.

‘I have often longed to tell you all,’ said Edith, ‘but I did not know whether I ought.’

‘Lady Tracy told me. I got her letter yesterday,’ said Honor; ‘and as I was coming here just now I met *him*, and he bid me tell you he would never forget.’

The friends never talked together on the subject after that day. It was a tacit compact — one they never infringed; but not the less was their intercourse unrestrained and their friendship heart-whole.

There are few, very few, people to whom a knowledge of each other's unspoken secrets is not a silent embarrassment. Where this is not the case, it is the highest form friendship can assume on earth.

When Honor returned to Anglet late that evening, she told her own family circle gently, but decidedly, that having been received into Edith's confidence altogether, she did not wish

to make her affairs subject of discussion in any way.

Conny curled her pretty mouth scornfully, and said she congratulated Honor on her friends. Mrs. Blake said that when she was young it was not considered proper for young ladies to have secrets; but Newton told his eldest sister she was right, and begged his mother to hire a carriage and drive with him to Cambo, to call on Mr. Bertram, before the days grew shorter.

END OF VOL. I.







